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CAUCASIAN LEGENDS

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN OF A. GOULBAT

BY

SERGEI DE WESSELITSKY-BOJIDAROVITCH

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PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR

Last year the Georgian people celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the annexation of its country to the dominion of the Great White Tsar. These past one hundred years have been an era of uninterrupted and prosperous development of this nation of chivalry and heroism as well as loyalty and devotion to a great and good cause. In the third century A. D., the Georgians were converted to Christianity by Saint Nina. Ever since they have been a mighty fortress of christendom amidst wild and fanatic Mahometan tribes. Many a time their loyalty to their faith was sorely tried by the unparalleled cruelty of the Turks and Persians. Their capital was destroyed again and again, their churches ransacked and they commanded to tread upon the holy images which they venerated from childhood upwards. But even in such a terrible moment the Georgians showed themselves worthy of their all glorious traditions and thousands found their death in the River Koura at Tiflis, their chosen capital. For centuries this little nation of heroes battled with the Infidels and great was their distress, almost overcome by the gigantic forces of savage enemies, when a protector appeared in the north and re-established law and order, confidence and happiness. Seeing that it was essential to assure a permanent security, the ruler of Georgia asked in the name of his people to be annexed to the Motherhood of Orthodox Nations.

I here reproduce a translation from the Russian of the reply of Alexander I. Parlovitch, Emperor of all the Russias (1801):

"Not to increase our forces, not for the gain and extension of ours, the mightiest empire in the world, do we take upon ourselves the burden of the administration of the Georgian kingdom. Worthiness, honor, and humanity alone place on us the holy duty to establish in Georgia a government which may found righteousness, safety, and give every one protection of the law."

Those are the noble terms of one of Russia's noblest rulers, and upon them is based the policy of the administration in regard to the Georgians. The Georgians, being of the same faith as the Russians, sympathize with the latter and are nowadays both a bulwark of the orthodox church and of the true Russian conservative governmental spirit. In the wars of 1853–56 and 1877–78 they fully proved their perfect fidelity and chivalrous readiness to assist their great deliverers against the Turks. The men of Georgia are renowned for their heroism, while the women of that country are the most beautiful in the world. The chief occupations of the Georgians are: pasturing, farming, jewelry work, silk-manufacturing, and wine-growing. The Georgians, taken as a whole, receive a considerable amount of education, and their newspapers, several of which are published at Tiflis, are very good. The leading paper is the "Iveria" (*i. e.,* Georgia). Tiflis, the traditional capital of Georgia, is a city of 180,000 inhabitants, among whom are 33,000 Georgians proper. A number of other tribes or nationalities such as the Imeretians, Gourians, Mingrelians, Wanetes, Khevsoures, etc., also belong to what is called the Georgian family of nations. The greatest poet of Georgia is Prince Kazbek. Among the grand old families we find the Orbelians, who trace their ancestry back to an emperor of China, the Chavchavadzes, the Growzinskys, Bgaration-Moukranskys, Amilakvaris, Tsitsianovs, and many others, all of whom have rendered their native land incomparable services and deserve the highest praise. The author of the legends which I have attempted to translate, is a native Georgian, Mr.

A. Goulbat, now living in Central Russia and leading a literary life. He is filled with enthusiasm for his native land and its valiant inhabitants. I have tried as well as I knew how to translate the legends in the same spirit as the author wrote them in the original, which was Russian.

SERGEI DE WESSELITSKY-BOJIDAROVITCH.

CAUCASIAN LEGENDS

I. The Rain

A LEGEND OF THE 11TH CENTURY

At the time of Tsar George I (the rulers of Georgia were called Tsars=kings), in the 11th century, there lived the famous general, Kaiours, belonging to the glorious Orbeliani family. It is known that these princes trace their ancestry from an emperor of China and more than once intermarried with our rulers, in consequence of which their position at the court of Georgia was an exceptionally pleasant one. It is necessary to add to this that the submission and zeal of the princes Orbeliani fully repaid this distinction. They occupied from generation to generation the post of Sparapet, that is, of general in chief of all the Georgian forces, and astonished the world with their bravery. When George went to war with the Greeks, Kaiours was taken prisoner, and as this took place during the battle of Shirimna, where a great many Georgian leaders, among them the generals Ratt and Zovatt, brothers of Kaiours, were lost, the Tsar for a long time thought that Kaiours had died together with them. It was only when the negotiations for peace began, that Emperor Vassilii the Second proposed to the Tsar to exchange Kaiours for fourteen fortresses, viz., for one in Tao, one in Baisiana, one in Artana, one in Kola, one in Djavaheta, in Shavhetta, and so on; and besides he demanded as hostage George's three-year-old son, the Tsarevitch-successor Bagrat.

"I am so much indebted to the princely family of the Orbelianis that I would consent to give half my kingdom for them," answered the Tsar.

At the end of the negotiations it was decided that the Tsarevitch-successor should remain as hostage at Constantinople until the Greeks had succeeded in introducing their administration in the above mentioned fortresses and in no case longer than three years. There were those who criticised the Tsar for giving away fourteen of the best fortresses in exchange for one man, but the people almost killed them. The general confidence in the warlike capacities of the princes Orbeliani was so boundless that many openly said: "Let only Kaiours come back and by him we shall not only regain possession of all our fortresses, but with the help of God we shall obtain the foreign ones!" There was no end to joy when he returned home. More than all rejoiced his twelve-year-old daughter Tamara. The captivity of the father was a great grief to her, as in his absence her mother and brother died. Seeing Tamara riding forth by herself to meet him, accompanied by an old gamdela (nurse) and several bitchos (young boys, servants), the hero Kaiours, the very glance of whom turned whole regiments to flight, cried like a child. Father and daughter tenderly embraced and for a long time could not speak.

The cries of joy among the people ceased, all remembered the good princess and the pretty boy, who had accompanied her everywhere, and sadness darkened the general joyousness. Kaiours was the first one to recover. He addressed those who had come to meet him and invited them to his house, to feast with him. "Tamara tries by her courtesy to take the place of my princess," he said, "the Lord is not without mercy; during my captivity he gave me a son in exchange for the one whom he took away. "Plinii," Kaiours says, turning to a handsome youth, standing behind him, "help thy sister and me to serve the guests." All looks were now fixed on Plinii; tall, well-built, with fine, regular features, he bore

an unmistakable stamp of aristocratic descent. Feeling himself the object of general interest, he blushed and drooped his eyes, like our bashful young ladies, and this modesty at once disposed everybody in his favor.

The old nobleman Alexander, whom for his bravery and warlike successes they all called "the Macedonian," sat down by Kaiours and began to speak thus: "Friend, thou hast rightly said that the Lord compensated thee for the loss of thy son by a fine youth, whose attachment and filial respect to you we all see and which dispose us in his favor, but we should also like to know who he is and why thou didst adopt him?" "During my captivity," answered Kaiours, "the Lord sent me a friend. He was a well-known dignitary, a favorite of the Emperor and did not need the friendship of the prisoner, nevertheless not a day went by that he did not visit me. We related to each other our war reminiscences and soon began to love each other like brothers. When I received news of the death of my wife and son, his friendly sympathy was my sole consolation. He told me about his life and thus I found out that he had lost his loving companion on the day of Plinii's birth. The boy is now eighteen years old and healthy, but not strong, and must be carefully looked after. Before my departure my friend fell ill and called me to him. 'I am dying,' he said, 'and thank God that this happens before thy departure, because I am going to hand over to your care my greatest treasure. Adopt Plinii instead of that son whom God took away from thee. The doctors think that his health needs a much warmer climate than ours.' I swore to love and treat him like my son and hope that the Lord will help me to fulfill my vow!" continued Kaiours.

"Thou didst satisfy my curiosity on one point," said Alexander—"now I want to find out something else, but for this we must repair to some other place. My heart also grieves about the son, who by the will of the monarch is among the young men accompanying the Tsarevitch-heir to Greece. Although our separation will not exceed

three years, yet it does seem an eternity to me." At these words the old men retired, and when they returned they were carrying bowls of horn, filled with wine. With a gay countenance they addressed the feasting crowd. "Friends," said Alexander, "congratulate me and help me to thank Kaiours, who gives me the very best he possesses: I asked the gift of the hand of his daughter for my boy." Numberless people offered their congratulations and the feasting continued far into the night. Kaiours and Alexander saw each other often, the latter always hastened to communicate any news about the son. In the meantime it was discovered that the young men who accompanied Bagrat were learning all European languages and sciences.

Kaiours thought thus: "I gave my daughter an entirely Georgian education, she knows neither European languages nor those arts by which the women over there so attract young men; would she not appear strange to your son?"

Quite unexpectedly was heard Plinii's sweet voice. "Allow me to say a word." The old men stared at him; he stood before them all red with emotion. "Speak!" was their unanimous answer.

"My late father did not mind spending any sum for my instruction, they taught me everything that is to be learned in our country. I easily learned the sciences, and if you permit me I shall be only too glad to educate my sister, who herself has a great passion for learning."

Permission was given, and from then on the young people were inseparable. Under Plinii's direction Tamara soon acquired great perfection in Greek. They studied together the poets, committing the finest parts to memory. Tamara's wonderful voice grew still grander when she learned from Plinii how to accustom it to the rules of music. A harp was obtained, and for whole hours at a time they rejoiced in song. To the young people days, weeks, and months went by with extraordinary rapidity, they were perfectly happy and for a long

time could not imagine how they had become so dear to each other. Being confident in Kaiours's affection, they fearlessly announced to him their discovery. But as Kaiours had once given his word to Alexander, he did not consider it right to break it. The lessons were stopped and Plinii forbidden to visit Tamara except in the presence of her father.

The young people's happiness suddenly turned to deep grief, which Kaiours, who loved them sincerely, secretly shared. After a few days of such torture, Plinii could not restrain his feelings and found occasion to have a secret interview with Tamara. With tears in his eyes he implored her to run away with him to Greece and there be married, but neither prayers nor tears could persuade her to become disobedient to her father.

"As thy wife should be so superior to all others as thou art the most beautiful man in the world," said Tamara, "how canst thou wish to marry a runaway girl? No, Plinii, let us wait! God is omnipotent! He knows, sees and esteems everything in due measure. He knows very well whether we find it easy not to be able to see each other, and I am sure that if we do nothing to provoke him, he himself will find means to stop our separation; only this I pray thee, do not forget me and don't try to find an occasion to see me secretly."

Morning and evening, day and night, Tamara prayed to God to make an end to their separation, and the Lord answered her prayer. Once upon a time, accompanied by an old nurse and a bitcho (young boy servant), she started on a pilgrimage to some distant monastery where there lived an old man of ascetic life. To him Tamara revealed her grief and the old man led her into his garden. There in the presence of all he began to pray for her, and suddenly a terrible cloud appeared, lightning was seen and fearful strokes of thunder were heard. Those who were present fell to the ground from fright. At last the storm was over.

"Arise!" said the prior, "the Lord has heard us sinners and comforted Tamara!"

"But where is she?" they asked.

"There," answered the old man, pointing to a magnificent fragrant lily, which had suddenly appeared in the midst of his garden. "The Lord turned her into a flower," he continued.

The people would not believe it. The nurse spread a rumor that the crafty abbot had hidden Tamara. Forgetting godly fear and fearing Kaiours's wrath, she insulted and cursed him. The boy servants, among whom there were many Mahometans, searched the whole monastery, all the surrounding woods and bushes, and not finding Tamara anywhere, they killed the holy old man and burned down the monastery. The ancient building stood in flames, also the stone enclosure, many a hundred year old tree, the huge library, in fact all the scanty good of the images. Alone the church and the lily into which Tamara had been transformed were spared.

Upon hearing of what had occurred, Kaiours and Plinii hastened to the spot. In the church there was nobody, everything else represented a field of coal and ashes. Tamara was nowhere to be found. Only in the midst of all these ashes there grew a splendid, fresh, fragrant white lily.

Plinii was the first to approach her and began to cry. Kaiours followed him and was very much startled. He noticed that when Plinii's tears fell on the coal surrounding the lily, her tender leaves grew quite yellow from jealousy; on the other hand when they dripped into the lily she grew red from joy.

"Tamara, is it thou we see?" asked the father.

Just at that moment there came up a little breeze and Kaiours and Plinii heard distinctly as though the leaves spoke:

"It is I, father!"

The inconsolable father could not stand the loss of his daughter and immediately died from grief, but poor Plinii cried so much and so long and so fervently prayed to God that he might be united with Tamara, that in the end

the Lord transformed him to rain. I have heard that in bygone times whenever a dryness set in the inhabitants of the surrounding villages hastened to the abandoned church, around which lilies always grew in abundance, and picked whole baskets of them. They scattered the fragrant harvest in the fields and gardens and the young maidens sang Tamara's song. The lovely melodious composition was as fragrant and clean as the dear flower which they glorified. This song, indeed, is Tamara's very prayer, showing all her childish faith in God's almightiness. It ends with an invocation of Plinii, who, they say, always appears in the form of a warm, beneficial rain. I heard even that these lilies preserved a rare capacity, viz., sometimes to grow red, sometimes yellow, and our maidens thus concluded that these flowers could tell one's fortune. Each maiden notices one flower and after the rain goes to look for it. Is the lily yellow, the young girl entertains great fears as to the fidelity of her lover; is it red, she never doubts his attachment to her. Whether this quaint custom still prevails I don't know. I am always sorry when some such tradition becomes forgotten! In our ancient legends there was so much of the truthful, honorable and elevated that these circumstances alone rendered them most instructive.

II. Bakarr the First, Tsar of Georgia

A STORY

Bakarr the First ascended the throne after the death of his well-beloved and much-esteemed father, Mirian the Converter. Remembering the counsels of his dear, dear father, he turned all his glorious efforts towards converting and instructing those mountain inhabitants who had not submitted themselves to the peremptory orders of Mirian and had thus not appeared to be baptized with the rest of the grand old nation. Highly

honorable in every way, simple in his manners, the ever-patient Bakarr finally succeeded in obtaining the long desired baptism of the wild unbelievers, without applying any forcible and dangerous measures. Having heard of his peacefulness of character, the Armenian Tsar thought it opportune to take the throne away from him and hand it over to Irdat, the son of the deceased Tsarevitch Revv and the Armenian Tsarevna Salomee. But Bakarr united all the qualities of a brave and excellent general with the greatest virtues of an earnest, peaceful Tsar. He therefore arranged an alliance with his dear nephew, the Persian King Kossrovve the Second, and jointly with him, in a fearful and hard-fought battle in the province of Djavakheta, completely defeated and destroyed the wretched Armenian army and turned it to disgraceful flight. The amply terrified Tsarevna Salomee begged the Emperor of Greece to be kind enough to explain to Bakarr that the Armenian Tsar had not acted upon her advice or desire.

Willing to let each one of his loving subjects approach and debate with him, Bakarr on the other hand did not consider it in accordance with his sublime merit to have the neighboring sovereigns mix in and begin to reason about his own family affairs, and therefore he briefly replied to the great Greek Emperor thus: "Until in the family of the Georgian Tsar Bakarr the First there proveth to be one who is unable and too weak to properly reign, the throne will belong to it, and the children of Revv ought not to bring forth the slightest pretensions. To his ally, however, to Kossrovve the Second, he announced that the attack of the Armenian Tsar forced him to seriously look after the safety and education of the children of his brother and sister, whom Mirian willingly permitted to be married to Pkerose. Actually at the end of the war, the first active deed of Bakarr was the exact arrangement about the domains of Pkerose.

Instead of Rana from Bardave on, given to Pkerose by Mirian, he begged Bakarr to give him Sammshvillde,

to which the Tsar fully consented, constructing a direct line as far as the entrance of the Christavstvo (province) of Abbots. Deeply moved by the great-heartedness of the Tsar, Pkerose accepted Christianity and was baptized with his whole nation, but Bakarr occupied himself with thoroughly settling the widow and children of his brother Revv.

He led them to Kouketka, and having made his way into Roustava, he handed over this country to the administration of his nephews Irdat and Bakourious with the title of kristaves, and under them their mother Salomee quietly lived in their company. This sovereign sacrificed his whole life to the betterment and thorough reforming of his great monarchy and distinguished himself by passionate uprightness. He considerably increased the churches and the church servants. By him was also founded the perfectly magnificent cathedral of Tsillkanny.

He died in the year three hundred and sixty-four and was buried by the side of his father Mirian. Before dying he also, just like Mirian, hung his royal crown on the marvellous cross of Saint Nina, touched his son and successor Mirdat the Second with it, and afterwards placed the crown on the head of his son and openly proclaimed him his rightful heir. This solemn custom was strictly observed by all Georgian Tsars. Although Bakarr made absolutely no new acquisitions, yet his short but most wise administration had firmly united together all decaying, poorer, and mutually inimical parts of his government, and finally confirmed the actual preponderance of Christianity over all other religions, and therefore his reign was considered one of the very best and most blissful.

III. The Incombustible Tulip

In the second century B. C., Armenia was governed by Valarsass, the brother of the Persian Shah Arsass the Great. At that period the countries to the north of the Arabs were called Chaldea and Pontus. In the latter lived a young hero, Morphiliziy, who at the head of his followers could not only repel all attacks of Valarsass, but even in a decisive battle completely defeated him; thereupon he annexed also the Georgian frontier counties, among others Kaeounan, and was proclaimed Tsar (King) by his grateful subjects.

It happened that just then Kaeounan was governed by John, a native of the city of Damascus, whom they therefore called Damassk, *i.e.,* the Damascian. He was a widower and possessed but one daughter, a perfect beauty, by the name of Nina. During the battle, Damassk, through his personal bravery, attracted Morphiliziy's attention, who challenged him to a duel. For a long time the old warrior's experience counterbalanced the hero's strength of the Pontitian, but in the end his old strength began to give way, his movements slackened their usual rapidity and he could not escape from Morphiliziy's horse, which transpierced him. Dripping with blood, he fell from the faithful steed. At that moment Morphiliziy jumped off his horse and tried to revive him with all his strength. The dying man opened his eyes.

"Ask whatever favor thou wishest, old hero!" the conqueror exclaimed. "In thee I found the first man whose military adroitness excelled mine!"

"Don't abandon my daughter," murmured John, and thereupon died.

Entering Kaeounan, Morphiliziy first of all rushed to John's house and was astounded by Nina's beauty.

"She shall be my wife!" he loudly broke out, and immediately appointed a day for the wedding.

With fright the unhappy orphan heard of this decision. How could she, who so dearly loved her father, become the wife of his murderer.

"Not for anything in the world," she repeated a thousand times in one hour, and upon pronouncing that sentence, her magnificent eyes, which were usually a very ocean of goodness and mildness, were filled with some terrible fire.

We must notice that in those times it was customary among our noblemen to choose gamdelis among the Jewesses, for their daughters. John had of course followed the general custom, and little Nina, who in early childhood had lost her mother, loved her gamdela (nurse) with all the enthusiasm of her daring soul. All of the gamdela's tastes were Nina's. Her faith, her God were the same faith and the same God as her pupil's. Thus the nurse was the first person to come to hear of Nina's decision and was asked for advice. The old woman silently listened to her and long did not say a word, only the features of her face took a painful expression.

"Why art thou so silent?" impatiently remarked Nina.

"I am reflecting whether I shall tell thee still another cause for thy refusing Morphiliziy or whether it is better to say no more about it." At last with a sad smile she broke out and at the same time her piercing glance was fixed on Nina, who flew into a passion and turned away.

"And so my supposition is true, thou dost love the aznaoure of Cicero!"

Nina threw herself on the floor and hid her grieved face between the knees of the gamdela. The old woman caressingly touched her long hair with her wrinkled hands and began to think; at last she decided to reveal the result of her reflections.

"Thou art so young that I am afraid to advise thee seriously. Could not a time well come when thou mayest be sorry to have made him thy master, who might

be thy slave? Remember that Morphiliziy is a king, but Cicero does not even belong to the aristocracy. He is a simple, poor nobleman of such as thy father had many; were he alive such a marriage would hardly suit him. Besides thou art accustomed to luxury, while Cicero has absolutely nothing, also whatever thou hast thou canst never give away. The only means to unite you is for you to run immediately into the country of his forefathers and there be married. I tell thee openly: What disposes me in favor of Cicero is his constant, endless and boundless submission to thee. I noticed it long ago and have been watching him, but notwithstanding my experience and closest attention, I did not find a single instance in which he might be blamed."

The hidden face of the young lady lit up with some roguish smile. Perhaps she thought that the nurse esteemed her sagacity too highly. Whatever may have been her feelings, the moment she raised her head from the knees of the old woman, all traces of her smiles vanished. She sat upon the floor at the nurse's feet and for a long time they silently glanced at each other; each one had her idea. Suddenly Nina quite unexpectedly threw her white hands around the neck of the old woman, hid her face on her shoulder and loudly cried.

"Gamdela," she passionately said, "arrange it as thou didst just now propose, arrange it all if thou lovest me and dost not wish that I should die! I don't want, I cannot—no, I will not live without Cicero! For him I will give up with joy and distinction my riches or even the royal crown! What is all that to me if I am not to have him? Dost thou understand, dear nurse, that I love him more than I ever loved thee, or my father; that I love him more than whosoever in the world; that I love him as fishes do water. And thou sayest that he could be my slave—well, do I want such a thing? I myself desire to be his slave and do all he commands! I love him just because he is poor, unknown and a stranger to every one here!" and Nina again became hysterical.

The poor gamdela did her best to quiet the young girl with caressing movements of her aged hands, she herself trembled from emotion, quietly cried and innerly prayed. In the end she succeeded in putting Nina to bed and herself called for Cicero, and with her first glance at the young man persuaded herself that she was not mistaken as to his boundless devotion to Nina. Yesterday still all fell in love with the handsome youth, in the best of health, but now he stood before her with a rawboned pale face and castdown eyes, even the lips grew white and their edges nervously jerked.

The old woman with precaution informed him how matters stood, and immediately tried with all her might to restrain his boundless joy.

When he had reflected a little, she ordered to prepare two riding horses for the hour of midnight and advised Cicero to wait at the Western Gates, whither she promised to bring Nina, dressed in men's clothes.

Upon this occasion he was also given a belt, richly sewn with gold. Having done there everything that was necessary, the gamdela went to Nina and prepared her for the hasty departure. Midnight came. With silent steps two shades moved through the whole house and across the court. At the Western Gates the impatient cavalier was already waiting with an extra horse.

Nina quickly mounted it, with a happy smile motioned to the dear old woman, and soon they disappeared in the darkness.

However much the gamdela wished to remain at the gates, as long as the trampling of the galloping hoofs could be heard of those horses which took away with them, perhaps forever, all that was dearest to her in the whole world, common sense did not permit this and the nurse returned home and passed the remainder of the night in tears and prayer. At sunrise the house was filled with her lamentations.

The frightened servants instantly answered her call and found her in the garden on the bank of the river.

By her side lay Nina's dress and linen. Seeing people run, she motioned to them, and wringing her hands she explained to them that Nina was drowned. Old and young rushed to the river, not only the people of the household, but the whole town joined those seeking; nevertheless all efforts proved to be in vain.

Morphiliziy's warriors upon hearing of what had taken place immediately informed their lord, and were all without exception ordered to go to search for Nina. Morphiliziy himself rushed to the garden and began to question the grief-stricken old woman.

From her explanations, constantly interrupted by moaning, he understood that Nina long ago asked to go bathing, that the gamdela, fearing the swiftness of the river, had not given her permission, and that this day at sunrise the impatient girl had quietly slipped out into the garden while the nurse was sleeping and got what she desired. Awaking and beholding the empty bed, the gamdela immediately ran to the banks of the river, but found nothing but Nina's dress.

Morphiliziy himself went into the water, turned over every bush and stone, swam beyond the town, but found nothing at all. Everywhere he met people who were on the same errand; the warriors searched, the men of Damask, the citizens, yes, all who could swim, were out working, but in vain. The grieved sovereign came up on the bank and declared that he would grant any reward to him who found Nina living or dead and brought her to him. A day went by—no news. And a second day went by; many of those on the lookout returned home with the discouraging news that they had not found the girl. The town again took its usual look. Morphiliziy alone did not sleep and thoughtfully sat on the roof of his house. The night was warm, with bright moonlight, and acted quietingly upon the unhappy Tsar. About midnight he beheld a shade approaching his house and began to look at it with anxiety. Soon he discovered that it was his favorite negro.

"Noy!" he cried out.

"It is I, sire," replied the negro. "Let me immediately report."

"Come up quickly!" and Morphiliziy's heart was suddenly bent and frosted and beat so hard that it caused pain. The hero put his hand on his breast in the hope of quieting its movements, but it went on most painfully and his momentary joy turned to fearful worry.

In a moment Noy appeared before him. "Hast thou found her alive or dead?" he quickly asked.

"Living," began Noy, "but . . . . "

"Well, where is she then? . . . . a horse, let me have a horse this very moment!" shouted Morphiliziy, but the disappointed, almost terrified looks of Noy caused him to think the matter over.

"Why art thou thus silent?" he impatiently asked the slave.

"Sire . . . . she is not . . . . alone! She lives with . . . . a young man!"

Morphiliziy turned his back upon the negro in order to hide the impression which these words had produced on him. He sat down on a stool and pointing to the carpet lying at his feet ordered Noy to relate everything in detail and without hurrying.

"Sire," said the negro—"I wished to deceive thee! I wanted to escape bondage and return to the land of my forefathers. I thought of taking advantage of the general disorder, went into the stable, saddled thy horse, explaining that I was starting for the search, and while all the people were looking for Nina along the banks of the river, I started in the opposite direction—straight to the sea, where I dreamt of finding a ship and sailing away. At first I was unusually delighted, but little by little I began to be overpowered by the fear of being pursued. My horse flew like the wind and I induced it to go faster and faster. In the meantime my fear grew stronger at every step. It changed to terror—into some kind of despair; I no longer let the horse catch breath, but chased

him like a crazy man. In the end his speed grew smaller. I became furious, tore the cloth and beat him without mercy. He still went on a little farther and beyond his strength, and then rolled into the dust. This was in a forest. I unsaddled and unbridled him, but he did not raise himself and so I continued my way on foot. Suddenly I overheard human voices; I stopped and began to listen. Evidently these were two persons in love with each other, and I had nothing to fear. I cautiously approached, continuing to hide myself in thick bushes and trying to look at those conversing.

"To my surprise I beheld two young boys; they sat together and were eating. 'Must we ride still farther?' asked the younger one.

" 'I am very tired!'

" 'It is no wonder you are tired, my little soul,' replied the older boy, 'why, see! we did not leave our horses for about twenty-four hours; I do think it would be more sensible if we remained the night here; I shall light a fire as a guard against wild beasts, put under thee my bourka [a long black cape without sleeves commonly used all over the Caucasus], and watch while thou art asleep!'

" 'Ah! but if we made for the village thou too couldst rest?'

" 'No, my joy, I am more afraid for thee of Morphiliziy and his followers than of all the wild animals of this slumbering thicket. From the latter I can always save my bride, but from Morphiliziy it is only a wonder if we escape alive!'

"I understood all, and impulsively retired. Why should I then run away, knowing that thou wouldst give me my freedom in any case. Returning to that spot whence I had descended to overhear their conversation, I suddenly came upon a little stream and sat down on its bank. My crazy race had quite exhausted my strength. I drew some bread from my pocket, picked off some wild figs and began to eat, reflecting how I should come home the quickest. Seeing where I was, there was no use of

trying to return home on foot, but where should I find a horse.

"Having finished my meal, I arose and went to that place where a few hours before I had abandoned your horse; to my greatest pleasure he was munching grass. I led him to the stream, let him drink, saddled him and put on the bridle. To ride him would have had no sense. After walking an hour he grew more lively, and I began to hope that he was recovering, especially as he suddenly joyfully raised his head and neighed. I imagined that in the distance some other horse answered likewise. I hurried in that direction; after a little while the horses again exchanged compliments, and guiding myself by their voices, I soon met a young cavalier on a fine Persian horse.

"By his fashionable costume it was easy to distinguish him as one of the local aristocrats. I reverently bowed; he answered my salute and his eyes were fixed upon thy horse, which he fell in love with, like a connoisseur.

" 'Whither art thou, traveller?' he asked.

" 'I am from afar, sir, sent by my ruler upon a hasty and important affair and must walk the rest of the way for I am incapable of managing this horse.'

" 'It is the very best thoroughbred Arabian steed that I have ever seen; thou didst excessively tire it and thou wilt certainly ruin this jewel for good if you do not give him rest. I don't know thy master and don't wish to know his name, but even on his own land I cannot allow such a treasure to be ruined. Mount then my horse, gallop away to thy lord and tell him that thou didst leave his half-dead horse at the tavad of Bidandara's. If he wishes to sell him I shall pay any price he may demand; if he does not want to part with him, why then let him send back my horse and take back his own; at Bidandara's everybody finds hospitality—even animals,' and he got off his horse, took hold of and led away mine without listening to my exclamations of gratitude.

"I gave him time to go a long way and then chased his

horse still more mercilessly than thine. I knew that thou wilt give him the centuple, and therefore thought only how I could reach thee the soonest. Upon entering the town he fell and I ran the rest of the way on foot. What doest thou command me to do now?"

"This moment thou wilt choose two of the best horses and lead them hither. We shall immediately start in pursuit; tell my lifeguards secretly to catch up with us. Let them have pity upon the horses and take plenty of wine and provisions with them, for thou must be quite hungry!"

In a few minutes the two cavaliers rode out of town and later on they were followed by a whole detachment of warriors, trying to catch up with them. Morphiliziy was not riding very fast, but thinking. He remembered that still a short time before, when but a simple army commander, he had no other wishes besides military glory; all his plans seemed to have been successfully carried out when he was proclaimed King and his name passed from mouth to mouth, surrounded with all the glitter of the recent victory.

The triumph over Damask, the most glorious warrior of his century, appeared to him as the height of blissfulness. He remembered also that unusual, up to this time new to him, feeling which suddenly arose in him upon beholding Nina.

The very glance at this young girl, hardly out of her teens, drove out of his heart and imagination everything in which he up to this moment had prided himself—military glory and victories over Valarsass and the accession to the throne—all vanished somewhere in the distance, occupied some remote spot and was no longer of any interest to him. And to think that this child had made fun of him! This child had managed her nurse and servants and warriors and even him, Morphiliziy, the terrible, powerful and invincible conqueror! This little girl feared not his anger, was not frightened by his forces, did not tremble before his might. His warrior's renown, his

monarchy, his personal charms had not won her. She was not at all excited or especially delighted over the impression she had produced upon the hero, and in just the same way she treated a little boy, whom he could knock down with one blow like some piece of paper!

He resolved that Nina should be his wife however difficult it might be to obtain her hand. She did not wish his love—she did not see the need of his caresses—"then," thought he, "let her feel my strength, my might, my power —yes, my wrath!"

These reflections were interrupted by the approaching warriors. Morphiliziy turned around; the moon lit up his pale face and sparkling eyes. The soldiers were frightened, never yet had they seen him look thus.

"Give Noy wine and bread—he will eat on the way, but to you, my comrades in battle, I shall now unfold the secret of my soul. You know my whole life, you know very well that there is not a man who could boast of having conquered me; you know too that my very glance can put regiments to flight, that my name was sufficient to make kings and nations tremble, and now, when I reached the height of glory and power, I wanted to divide them with an orphan, I wanted to place her upon that throne for which I am indebted to your love and submission to me, I wished to proclaim her Tsaritsa and share with her my glory, my happiness, and my power! But she refused all these things, and me too, and ran off with a boy. Now . . . . "

Morphiliziy's speech was interrupted, he sighed deeply and continued:

"We are out to pursue them. Think up some punishment worthy of their crime. What shall be done with her?"

"Kill them both!" was the unanimous reply.

"That is insufficient!" answered the Tsar.

"Drown them in the river, where they betrayed their deception!"

"Not enough!"

"Have them burned alive!"

"Still too good for them!"

"Let them be torn to pieces by wild beasts!"

"All this is very little!" replied Morphiliziy. "All this is quickly over and does not appease my desire for revenge. They must be captured alive and locked up one opposite the other, so that through the open windows of their dungeons they may see each other, and then I shall prepare my rival a spectacle that will wound him worse than fire, but afterwards I shall hand over to you Nina, and then there will be time to cut off their proud heads and throw them away to be eaten by the dogs!"

The Tsar grew silent, his face became still paler, his eyes stared out worse than before; he was so terrible to look at, that even the fearless warriors could not glance at him and hardly approached his horse and Noy's, which they were hurrying on at full speed. The sun rose—they continued their ride, a whole day went by, the journey went on as before, and night overtook them again when they entered a forest. Noy announced that it was the same forest in which he had left the fugitives. The moon shone poorly from behind the eternal trees, it became necessary to get off the horses, which were left to the care of several warriors, but the others went on and soon found that little field of wild copse on which Cicero and Nina had rested, they even found the place where they had been sitting.

The grass was trodden down, it bore the traces of spilt wine and crumbs of bread—one large shrub was cut down—but there were no branches.

"They probably burned them in a wood-pile," remarked Noy.

"Well, where then are the traces of the wood-pile?" replied Morphiliziy. Upon noticing that from the place where they stood onward the grass was trodden down and seemed to form a kind of road, all followed upon this track. By sunrise they left the forest and spread themselves out over a splendid meadow, which ended in a

field. The track went on across the meadow to the very field, which was beginning to be worked by laborers.

Morphiliziy dispatched one of his warriors to ask to whom this field belonged and whether they had not seen two boys on horseback yesterday. The soldier returned with a peasant.

"This is the field of the tavad Bidandari, we are his men and did not work here yesterday, but we heard that our master had brought home some two youths, one of whom is ill, and to-day by the orders of the proprietor, my brother went for the znabar (a kind of doctor) on the seacoast."

"Why, is it far to the sea?" asked Morphiliziy.

"Six or seven agatches" (an agatche is a little more than six and less than seven versts).

"What! is there no doctor nearer than that?" again asked Morphiliziy.

"Why should there not be one? We have a doctor in the village who is immediately at the side of the patient when required, but the other one is cleverer because he takes advantage of the sea tide in order to collect plants, shells, insects, and little fishes, which our own doctors do not get a chance to use for their medicine."

"Tell thy master that the owner of the Arab horse came to thank him for his favor, to pay his debt, and asks permission to come in."

The peasant went off, but Morphiliziy ordered his warriors to return to the forest, and taking Noy with him, followed from afar the running laborer. He was very particular in explaining to Noy why he did not wish his name to be disclosed before the right time.

Bidandari came out to meet his guest and led him to some gorgeous apartments where a number of fashionably attired servants surrounded the newcomer, offering elegant clothes, aromatic soaps, and every kind of luxury customary in those times. Having washed and dressed, Morphiliziy came into an adjoining room where a dinner was set. The host met him at the door with

two large horns filled with old wine, which, joining hands, they drank at the same time, as a sign of friendship. Notwithstanding that Morphiliziy had eaten almost nothing for more than two days, the rare and numerous dishes did not dazzle him. He had to make an effort in order to pretend that he was eating. At the end of the dinner the host offered him to take a rest, but Morphiliziy said that before that he would like to talk with him alone: then Bidandari, who had not even looked as though he had recognized his sovereign, respectfully fell down on one knee and kissed the edge of the royal coat.

"You recognized me, tavad?" said the surprised King.

"Yes, your Majesty, but I did not dare to say this before the rest, because I did not know the reason you had for not speaking openly."

"I came hither to carry out my revenge and I cannot do it without your help."

"Pray tell, what is it you order?"

"But this is against the laws of hospitality, in which your house has always glorified itself."

"If it be impossible to receive satisfaction for being insulted otherwise—then give orders to kill me—in such a way at least I fulfil my duty as to you, like a faithful subject, obliged to defend the honor of his sovereign even to death and shall not be responsible for what occurs in my house after my death."

"But, tavad, you forget that in such a case I fulfil my duty neither like a Tsar, nor like a guest, but of this let us speak later. The point of the affair is that in your own house my bride is hiding, disguised as a boy, and I want to take her immediately with me. It seems to me that by handing her over to me you do nothing offensive to the rules of hospitality; as to her companion, he has insulted my royal honor, and it is only natural that every true subject should himself chase him out of his house as soon as he learns about his crime."

Bidandari sighed and his face took a sad expression.

"I ask a favor of you, sire; sooner order that I be killed than that my guest receiveth the merited punishment and let me now tell you all that weighs on me. Before death one is permitted to put aside every etiquette and to speak with one's sovereign without the customary court formalities, thereupon I take the liberty of treating you like a brilliant warrior."

"You forget, tavad, that I am very much obliged to you, and that you therefore have the right to demand anything you like of me except to pardon my rival. You yourself are a young and unmarried man," is it possible you do not understand my thoughts?"

"Forgive me, sire, but I must again speak none but the bare truth! My meeting with your negro you already know about. Wishing to come home by the very most direct way, I went on a trail which by chance brought me up to two boys. The younger of them was shaking from malaria, he was pale and lay upon a bourka, but the older one sat by him in despair and wrung his hands. On this same little meadow two saddled and tired horses were feeding; by their exhausted look it was perfectly clear that the travellers came a long way. I came up from behind, and when I greeted them, the elder brother quickly jumped up and seized a kinjall (Caucasian knife or rather dagger), while the younger boy simply sighed and looked at me in a terrified way; he was evidently either too ill or too exhausted to make any kind of a movement. 'Fear nothing,' I said, 'I came to offer you my hospitality, which you hardly have a right to refuse as you are on my lands.'

" 'Excuse me,' suspiciously answered the older one—'before I accept your kind offer, I should like to ask you where you took this horse from, which yesterday was still the property of the monarch?'

"I explained it. The boy reflected. 'What dost thou think of, young man, accept quickly my offer, and together we shall carry the sick brother into a warm room, in which his illness will be over by morning, while here he may die from taking cold.'

"The boy got frightened.

" 'Promise me not to hand us out to Morphiliziy alive or dead, and I will readily accept your invitation with gratitude; otherwise we should both prefer to die.'

"I glanced at the sick boy, he evidently made an effort to smile and thus confirm his brother's words, but this smile lit up his face with such an inexpressible magnificence that I began to be very much puzzled—after all was it not a woman? I accorded the desired promise. We made litters of the branches of a soft coppice. I told them that I would send horses for their conveyance, but thy horse tied itself to the girdle and we safely brought our litter to the house. During the night the patient began to groan and constantly repeated:

" 'Darling Cicero, if they discover us—kill me, I wish to be neither a Tsaritsa nor anything else except thy wife!'

"There was not the least doubt left by this time; this was a woman who had run away from some detested man together with her lover. Seeing that it was no longer possible to hide anything, Cicero related the whole story to me. They already loved each other, sire, when thou didst first see her. Perhaps thou wilt say that Cicero might perfectly well have conquered his attachment; taking into account that Nina was the object of this attachment—such a change was very improbable indeed. I say further that I myself was overtaken by such an extraordinary feeling of delight before this utmost perfection of beauty that I felt as though it was not worth living on earth if one could not possess Nina; and in consequence of all this, sire, thou dost partly fulfil my proper wish if thou dost order me to be executed as one bending down before thy will. To hand them out to you after my promise is beyond my powers."

Morphiliziy walked up and down the room with huge steps and nervously twitching with his mouth.

"I wish to see her!" he said.

"Oh, monarch, be gracious! Before thy arrival here,

a doctor had just attended upon her. She has a fever from terror, she frequently cries, saying:

"'I am so tired that I cannot ride any farther! They pursue us—yes, they pursue us!' If she should see thee now, death would surely set in. As a satisfaction to thy offended pride, take away my life, which has become so painful to me. I am more guilty before thee than Cicero, because I dared to fall in love with thy bride, while he just worshipped a free girl and was fervently loved by her before thou didst enter the town and becamest our ruler. Thou didst permit me to request rewards for ordinary services; don't let Nina perish! Don't deprive her of that happiness of which she deprived thee, and even me!" Bidandari wished to bend a knee, but the Tsar did not allow him to take such a step.

"We shall converse like young men of equal rank," said he. "Leave me alone; in a few minutes I shall call thee."

Bidandari went out, but Morphiliziy again paced the floor. Within him a terrible combat was going on. On one side his deceived love and wounded pride demanded cruel revenge, on the other hand the elevated thoughts of his soul, his well-known love of mercy and chivalrous nobility of soul inclined him to follow Bidandari's advice. After walking a whole hour his bad intentions went away, and completely worn out from physical exhaustion as well as spiritual disturbance, he threw himself down upon the sofa and went to sleep with the firm resolution to pardon Nina.

But alas! Ibliss (the devil) is always angered by any noble intention, be it of a Christian, be it of a heathen, and always exerts himself in finding ways of preventing their being carried out. And thus it happened also this time. He appeared to Morphiliziy in a dream under the form of Nina; she was sitting at the feet of Bidandari and gaily joked and laughed. Morphiliziy did his best to overhear their conversation and understood that they were laughing at his confidence. Bidandari boasted about his cleverness, but Nina laughed aloud.

"I assured him that thou lovest Cicero—that once I came upon you by chance; and he believed it all like a stupid child. He allows Cicero to marry and lets you go to Rome, whither I shall soon follow you, and then only will he find out the true state of affairs. Thou must admit, my Nina, that I cleverly thought up all and am worthy of a reward!"

Instead of answering, Nina threw herself on his neck and Morphiliziy saw and heard how the mouths joined together in kissing. He awoke trembling from furor. "Noy," he cried. The negro appeared.

"Tell the warriors to bring me immediately, all chained, Bidandari, Cicero, and her! I shall instantly ride home alone! If I stay here but a minute longer I shall choke them all, and this is little! A horse, I say, a horse!"

In a moment he was already riding off home, but at sunrise on the following day they brought to his house the three guilty ones. He came out on the roof, all wicked, dark, terrible! All his former noble feelings had disappeared for good, he gave himself up to the work of pitiless revenge. Silently he pointed to Nina and his house. The warriors understood and led her there. Cicero made a desperate effort to run after her, but the heavy chains and powerful arms of the soldiers held him fast. Then the Tsar pointed to Cicero and to the house situated opposite him. Cicero was led off there. Before him there remained but Bidandari.

"Cut off his sly head!" shouted Morphiliziy, with such anger that a flame came out of his mouth at these words. The warriors fell upon Bidandari, but hardly had his head been divided from his body, when a wonder occurred. The day was bright and clear, without a single cloud in the sky, but at this moment an immense black cloud descended unto the corpse and hid him from the eyes of those standing about. All stared with the greatest attention. Little by little the cloud went off, but on the spot where Bidandari stood a magnificent white tulip grew up.

"He is a witch!" cried Morphiliziy, and again the flame was seen coming out of his mouth and nostrils.

"Bring the messenger of charms, the old gamdela, and knock her down before this cursed tulip!"

When they cut off her head and the blood was spattered unto the tulip, its centre grew strikingly red with pale rosy stripes on the leaves, which rendered it still more beautiful.

"Now," said Morphiliziy angrily, "drag Cicero to the window, stand by his side and don't let him turn his head. I should like him to see everything that is going to occur opposite!"

And he roared like a madman, and the flame again came out of his mouth, nostrils and ears. "Away with the remaining people from here," he shouted in conclusion. The square was instantly cleared.

"Hand me Nina over here!" was Morphiliziy's last command as he entered the house and took a place at a window opposite the one to which Cicero was lashed. They brought up Nina, half dead from fear.

"God of Israel! save me!" she cried out.

"Nobody will save thee from me!" wickedly answered Morphiliziy, and seizing Nina and embracing her he brought her to the open window. Opposite, Cicero was making astounding but futile efforts to free himself from his chains.

"Call to my God—Cicero! He is stronger than that man!" cried Nina. In this moment she glanced at her feet and fainted from terror. Morphiliziy was also astounded. He saw that her feet grew together and formed one black mass. He rashly tore her clothes off her body, but the transformation took place still faster; her whole body burned and grew black, and in a few minutes from her hands there jumped out a splendid butterfly and joyfully flew across the square to meet another one who had come out of Cicero's dungeon. Both of them hurried to the gamdela's body and to the white tulip and circled around them.

How could one describe Morphiliziy's wrath? To express his anger he could no longer find any human words. Some horrible, fearful sounds came out of his mouth together with flames. With terror his warriors looked on as he threw himself about on the square and as his eyes flashed. Little by little he turned completely into a flame. Fiery tongues began to climb out of the window, slipped down to the square and everywhere rose into the air, hoping to burn the poor butterflies. In vain did they fly all over the place, everywhere the flame chased them, at last they hid themselves in the tulip, which hastened to shelter them with its leaves. The whole fury of the fire was now fixed upon the unhappy little flower. Just then the body of the gamdela was transformed into a shower. As much as Morphiliziy harassed his enemy, the faithful gamdela fought against him; thus, notwithstanding all the badness of Morphiliziy, he did not succeed in burning the tulip, but the white leaves only ornamented themselves with all the colors of the flame. In the end the nurse finally conquered her enemy. He went down into the ground and shows himself only when the Lord wishes to punish sinners.

Oh, how dreadful he can then be! He shakes the whole earth, he tears to pieces its interior and forms deep precipices where formerly flourishing cities stood, lets whole villages fall to ruins, destroys hundred-year-old edifices, rips up gardens, fields, meadows, forests. In a word, Morphiliziy became a perfect subterranean fire and hourly curses new generations, while the good, faithful gamdela daily renders thanks to Him who turned her into a beneficent shower, without which men and beasts and plants and everything that is good on earth would perish.

When danger had vanished the leaves of the tulip opened themselves, the butterflies hopped out and hastened to Damassek's house. There they took again their former aspect. They were married, sold off all of John's

wares, and with incalculable riches went away to Rome. Before their departure they dug out the tulip and took it along with them. Cicero's country is also favored by heaven just like ours. There they purchased an elegant house, a magnificent garden, and the very best spot of this garden was reserved for the tulip. With their own hands they planted and took care of it, and soon the whole town delighted in the splendid flower, which, refreshed by frequent showers, grew in size. In a few years the whole garden became one field of tulips.

Cicero's and Nina's numerous children played around them, while a shower refreshed them morning and evening. Nina and Cicero always went into the garden at that time, and with gratefulness kissed the bright leaves, remembering their dear gamdela whom people now bless the world over, as a reward for her faithfulness and love.

IV. Saint Nina

A TALE

The fourteenth of January is a day of great solemnity throughout Georgia. This is the fête of Saint Nina, who converted us to Christianity. Nina's father, Zavonlon, was, according to tradition, a relation of the great and holy martyr, George, who married Sossanna, the sister of Yovenalii, patriarch of Jerusalem, whose family came from Koloss. He and his sister became orphans in early childhood and went to Jerusalem, where Yovenalii accepted an appointment as secretary, while Sossanna entered the service of Sarah, a woman of Vifleem. In the meantime Zavonlon travelled from Kappadokia to Rome to be presented to the Emperor, and reached there just at the time when the Brandjis, who had revolted, appeared in the valley of Patalania. Zavonlon did not let them reach Rome, but turned them to flight, captured the Tsar and leaders, and handed them over to the Emperor.

When, however, the monarch condemned them to death, they began to cry and implore Zavonlon to convert them to Christianity.

"Lead us to the temple of thy God," they said, "before having us killed. Thou didst capture us and having sacrificed us to God thou wilt not be responsible for our death, magnanimous hero!"

Then Zavonlon went to the patriarch and informed him of all that had taken place. Without saying a word to the Emperor, the patriarch, with the help of Zavonlon, baptized them, let them partake of the Holy Communion, and taught them the Christian faith. At sunrise on the following day the Brandjis rose, attired themselves in funeral robes and started for the place of execution. They prayed, thanked God, who had saved them by baptism, and said:

"We are immortal even after death, because the Lord hath glorified us by giving us permission to partake of the Holy Communion. Yes, let His name now be glorified! now, henceforth, and evermore! Woe to our fathers, who died in ignorance and remained in the dark, we shall not taste the sorrowful, but the joyful fruit. Approach, executioner, and cut off our heads!"

At these words they willingly stretched their necks under the sword. But Zavonlon, who could no longer stand this spectacle, rushed to the Emperor in order to implore his pardon for them.

"I give them to thee; do with them whatever thou wilt!" said the sovereign. Zavonlon lost no time in returning to the spot of execution and succeeded in saving those sentenced.

Thereupon they began to beg him to lead them home to their native land in order to preach there about the Faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and convert those desirous of leaving paganism. Zavonlon went to the patriarch, got some priests, and with the Emperor's permission departed, accompanied by the Brandjis. When they had but one more day of travelling before them, a rumor

spread in their country that the Tsar was alive and meant to return with his courtiers. The sections of Kkhozamo, Kkhosa, Goakchladja or Gardadja, Kkhonebag, Kkhjirag or Kindtjag, Zadja, Zaza, Zarda, Zamra and Tkmoka hurried to meet them, and were reached on the banks of a great and deep river; the water was blessed and they entered it and came out at one special spot where a priest laid his hand on them.

Zavonlon stayed with them till they were baptized and converted, put everything in perfect order, left the priests and went away, overwhelmed with gorgeous presents.

"I shall take these treasures for the decoration of the tomb of the Lord," thought Zavonlon, and started for Jerusalem, where he gave everything to the poor. At that time Yovenalii (in monkhood he had taken the name of Zadass) was patriarch of Jerusalem, and made friends with Zavonlon, while Sarah of Vavilon recognized him and learned to cherish his capacities. Besides, she said to the patriarch: "Zavonlon is the father of the Brandjis (original inhabitants of Barcelona) whom he converted, and to whom he gave the Holy Baptism; he carried out the commands of God, and thinking the matter over, I counsel thee to let him marry thy sister Sossanna" (probably Susanna). Sarah's counsel was carried out and the young couple left for Colossus, Zavonlon's fatherland.

Soon the bride gave birth to a daughter, Nina. When she was twelve years old her parents sold their whole property and settled in Jerusalem. Here Zavonlon was made a monk by the Patriarch German (because Sossanna's brother had already died), and became divorced from his wife. Pressing his daughter to his breast and covering her face with tears, he said:

"My dear and only child, I leave thee an orphan, and recommend thee to our Heavenly Father, God, who nourishes all live beings, because He is the father of orphans and the Judge of widows. Fear nothing, my daughter, but try to imitate Mary Magdalen and the sisters of Lazarus in their love to God. If thou lovest Him as

much as they did, He will also refuse nothing to thee." Having embraced her once more, he crossed the Jordan and started to preach the teachings of God among wild nations, where the only God, creator of all beings, knew that the time was ripe. Sossanna, on the other hand, by order of the patriarch, looked after the poor women, but was put in the service of Niapkhora, an Armenian woman from Doroim.

She stayed two years at her house, learning the laws of God, because at that time there was nobody in all Jerusalem so well acquainted with the Old and New Confession and who had such a broad and enlightened mind. Niapkhora was honorable and truthful and imitated Abraham in hospitality. Her house was always open to all pilgrims coming to pray at the Tomb of the Lord. More than once she happened to receive Christians who had been Jews and had inhabited Georgia. From them Nina heard a story how, at the time of the Babylonian captivity, some Jews had settled down at Mtzkhet and how they yearly sent some of their people to the Easter celebrations at Jerusalem. They also told her that in the second year of Aderka's reign in Georgia, they found out about the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ through these very messengers. Within thirty years at Mtzkhet delegates arrived from the preosviashtchennik (clerical title) Anna with the following news:

"He to whom the wise men brought presents is now grown up and teaches us a new faith; thereupon we are sending word to the Jews in order to find among them teachers of the law and to tell them: 'Come ye all, who uphold the law of Moses and clear up our perplexity! Let all those acquainted with law immediately leave the foreign lands and hasten with all possible speed to the fatherland, in order to confirm and guard the faith of our forefathers, carry out the laws of Moses, save the common folk from being dazzled by the new teaching, and furthermore, put the guilty one to death.' Elios, a man who was no longer young, of the tribe of the Levites, decided to

go to Jerusalem, leaving his mother, a descendant of the high priest Ilia, to the care of his sister Sidonia, because the old woman herself said:

" 'Go, my beloved son, whither the Lord and his holy law call thee, but mind my remarks: thou as a man well instructed in law shouldst not allow them to have a godless intention. I beg thee—do not have a hand in spilling the blood of this man. Thou knowest that this is the carrying out of the ancient prophecies, believe this one with all thy heart as I believe in him!' "

Together with Elios went a young Hebrew, Longinos, a warrior from Karssan, and they reached Jerusalem just at the time of the crucifixion of our Lord, as they arrived on a Friday.

When they drew lots, a Greek tunic fell to the share of Elios, but Longinos received the garment of the Lord, which he carried back to Kontais (this garment used to hang in the centre of the church in a crystal vessel up to the time of Shah Abass, who sent it away to Russia). When they began to crucify our Lord, by chance the sound of the hammer and nails came to the mother of Elios, and she exclaimed:

"Good-bye, kingdom of Israel! Unhappy ones—you are lost forevermore! By your craziness you kill your Vladyka and the Saviour of the world, and thus you become the wilful murderers of your Creator! Woe ye unhappy ones! There is no lamentation equal to your distress! Woe to me, because my ears have heard these mournful sounds!" and with these words she gave up her soul to God. When, however, Elios returned to Mtzkhet bringing the robe, Sidonia came out to meet him, and crying and weeping threw herself in his arms to tell him of her mother's death; and lo! she came to glance at the robe. She recognized it as having belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the thought that her brother had helped along his death filled her heart with indescribable sorrow. Having placed on her breast the invaluable holy relic, she died.

The news of her death spread all over Mtzkhet and reached the Tsar, who wished to see the dead woman. Coming to her body he was struck by the beauty of the robe, giving out a heavenly glow, and he wanted to put it on, but no power under the sun could tear the relic out of the arms of the deceased. Elios buried his sister together with the robe, and thus saved it from further attempts of the unbelieving.

These tales made a strong impression on Nina's soul, she often and long reflected how she might seek out the place where the robe was, and tried to obtain information from her governess. "My child," said Niapkhora, "I see that by thy strength thou are equal to a lioness, whose roar hushes up the growling of all quadrupeds. Thy capacity for penetration puts thee on a footing with the female eagle, who by her flying exceeds the male eagles and with her little eyes sees all creation; having beheld the booty she inspects it with her piercing glances, just as the fire experiments with the gold, and makes for it with spread-out wings. Such will be thy life. Thy voice will be heard all over the world and thy booty is to enrich God. Now I will explain it all to thee. Thou knowest that the immortal God had compassion for the mortal inhabitants of this world and came to earth in order to assemble around him the nations and save the whole world. His first good deeds were applied to the Hebrews, among whom he made the dead arise, made the blind see, and healed the sick. Astounded, they sent out messengers all over the world in order that the Hebrews might most rapidly assemble at a great council.

" 'We are perishing,' exclaimed the messengers, 'hurry, gather ye all!'

"Then from all countries there came together people, educated in the laws of Moses—they came together to openly oppose themselves to the Holy Ghost and, namely, do what was necessary to the world. They crucified the Lord Jesus and drew lots to get his robe. The robe was handed over without quarreling to the Man of Mtzkhet.

Thou knowest also that upon the burial of our Lord they placed guards at his tomb, but that he arose according to prediction, and in the tomb there remained nothing but the shroud, which the Apostle Luke took, but no one knows to whom he gave it. As to the vesture of the Lord, which was not found in the tomb, many conclude that the Apostle Peter took it without telling anything about its further fate. I in my turn am more inclined to believe what we heard from the Hebrews of Mtzkhet. The crosses are hidden here at Jerusalem, but this place is unknown to everybody until the Lord doth open it in times to come by his chosen messenger!"

Hearing these words, Nina raised herself and thanked God and asked: "Well, where then is that land where the robe was discovered?"

"The town of Mtzkhet is in Georgia. This is a mountainous land, the borderland of Armenia, and its inhabitants still continue to practise idolatry. The Chaldean magis have a strong influence over the people," replied Niapkhora.

At that time there arrived from Ethesus a woman who had come to visit and pay homage to the Holy Sepulchre and who stopped at Niapkhora's.

"Is the Empress Helen still in the shade of unbelief?" asked Niapkhora of her.

"I am her servant," answered the newcomer, "and know all her wishes, both open and hidden. She would like to become a Christian and be baptized."

"Let me go to the sovereign," Nina began to ask of her mistress, "perhaps our Lord Jesus Christ!"

"Let us first ask the blessing of our most holy Patriarch German," answered Niapkhora, and went to him.

Soon they called in Nina and placed her on the steps of the ambo; thereupon German put his hands upon her shoulders and having sighed from the depth of his soul, he said: "Vladyka, Immortal God! To Thee I commit this orphan, the daughter of a sister of one of Thy servants, and send her to preach Thy faith and announce Thy

resurrection everywhere where Thou desirest it to be carried out! Heavenly Jesus! be Thou her companion during the journey, her protector in danger, a refuge, a leader and a teacher as Thou hast been from century to century to all those who feared Thy holy name!"

That very night the Virgin appeared to St. Nina in a dream, to whose happy lot Iveria fell when she together with the apostles drew lots to see who should go to preach the faith of Christ in Georgia. In the hands of the Heavenly Queen there was a vineyard cross, which by her command was tied with some of Nina's hair. The Most Holy Virgin handed the cross to the sleeping girl and ordered her to go in her stead to convert the Iverian people. The Saint awoke with the cross in her hands and hastened to announce to her mother all that had occurred. With happy emotion Sossanna listened to her, kissed her, crossed herself, and blessing her, let her start out, commending Nina to the care of God.

From her mother Nina went straight to the Ethesian woman, whom she began to hurry up to start out, as her heart was burning with impatience; and notwithstanding the uncertainty and length of the journey, her readiness to do everything to serve God was so great that she did not have the least fear; this ardor was not left unrewarded by the Leader of Hearts. He Himself appeared to St. Nina, quieted and strengthened her for the coming expedition.

Having reached Ethesus, the Saint, in the house of her companion, found the Tsarevna Ripsime fleeing from the Diocletian torments together with fifty friends. Soon they were joined by three hundred maidens and Saint Gaiane, her nurse. Ripsime grew attached to Nina, because the Ethesian woman told her the latter's story, and the Saint took advantage of the kind feelings of the Tsarevna in order to instruct her still more in the faith; and in the course of this year she baptized the Queen, Gaiane, and seventy men of her suite.

They passed two years together at the monastery of

Poss-Rhoss. Just at that time Emperor Maximian sent his eunuchs everywhere to seek out the beautiful and good girls and bring them to him—without distinction of rank, extraction, or even religious belief.

The messengers arrived at the monastery of Poss-Rhoss, beheld Ripsime, and struck by her unusual beauty, they did not yet decide to take her, but began to enquire about her family. Having found out that she was of royal rank, they considered her worthy of becoming Maximian's wife, painted her portrait and went away. Hardly had Maximian glanced at her portrait, when his heart flamed up with some strong passion. He announced that in the whole world there was no equal perfection of beauty, that Ripsime was worthy of becoming his wife, that their marriage should be celebrated with unheard of till then solemnity, and he immediately sent messengers to all parts of his immense monarchy so that each subject might come to take part in the nuptial festivities. In the meantime the saints trembled from fear because they knew that this Tsar was like a vessel of anger, sly like a snake in heaven, also not clean, and idolatrous. They imagined that the Tsarevna's portrait would cause them to be very much grieved, and having fasted a long time, they prayed to God and decided to rely on His holy mercy and secretly run away from this place. And thus the seventy sisters set out for Armenia, in the neighborhood of Vagkarshapat, and reached a splendid town called New Dovin, where the Tsar himself resided.

Here they took up their quarters in poor huts, which surrounded the town from the north and west and were used for pressing out the grapes. Here with laborious work they earned their own living. Having, however, discovered that the Tsarevna Ripsime with her nurse and companions had disappeared in some unknown place, Maximian became perfectly furious and sent messengers to look everywhere for her.

His ambassadors arrived at the court of Trdat, Tsar of

Armenia, with the following letter: "The autocratic Emperor to his nearest brother, friend and comrade Trdat—I salute thee. Thy friendship is our most faithful ally; I inform thee above all that the sinful Christian nature is very harmful to us, because it forces the nations to disregard our mightiness and not respect our Majesty. Their religion consists of the following points: they serve a dead and crucified man, adore wood and consider it glorious to die for their Lord. Although they fear not the Jews, they nevertheless fear Him, whom the Jews killed and crucified. In their blindness they defame monarchs, scorn the gods, attribute absolutely nothing to the powerful brightness of the sun, moon, and stars—saying that these are the creations of the crucified. They anger the whole world to such a degree that fathers and mothers separate themselves one from another, not awaiting death. In vain do our commands and terrible tortures exterminate them, for they appear in still greater numbers! Having by chance seen a young Christian maid, I wished to marry her, but she, instead of desiring to be united with a Tsar, rebuked me like a dirty being and secretly ran off into thy lands. Investigate this affair, my dear brother, order a search to be made, and as soon as thou findest her with her companions, put to death the latter, but send splendid Ripsime hither, or if she pleases thee, take her, for thou wilt not find such a perfect beauty in all Greece. I hope that thou art in good health—adieu, serve the gods!"

Having read the letter, Trdat began the search, and soon found the saints. Ripsime produced on him exactly the same impression as on Maximian and he also made up his mind to have her become his wife. But the Saint flatly refused him, and so he tortured her together with thirteen companions on the fifth of October; and Saint Gaiane and two others on the following day. The remaining succeeding in hiding themselves; among them was also St. Nina, who by God's instructions hid herself in the branches of a prickly rosebush, without flowers. Here

she beheld a bright star coming down from the clouds; it served as a footstool to a deacon, in whose hands there was a censer; out of the latter there came such an abundant perfume that the sky really darkened. The deacon was accompanied by innumerable heavenly beings. This was the instant when the martyrs breathed their last breath, united themselves with the heavenly forces sent out after their souls, and together with them rose to heaven.

"Lord Jesus!" exclaimed the Saint, "why dost thou abandon me with aspics and snakes?"

In answer to this lamentation, a voice was heard from Heaven, saying: "Arise and start for the North, where there is a great harvest, but few workers!"

And thus the fourteen-year-old child went out to convert a whole country. She guided herself by the voice of God and overcame all difficulties: the length of the journey and physical exhaustion, and the fear of wild animals and wicked people and the cold and hunger and want! She went as the apostles went; without a staff, and just like them, she conquered kings, converted whole nations, healed the sick and glorified the name of that God who had called to her: "Arise and go!" Without losing a moment's time she left for the North.

The dear one constantly reminded her of the following words: "There is a great harvest but few workers!" and in this she seemed to think there was an explanation of the fact that on her fell the godly choice. Near Khertviss her strength began to fail. From continuous walking she had become quite lame and was forced to stop and go into winter quarters—enduring innumerable privations. In time her health was so much restored that she started again on her expedition.

Having reached the frontier of Djavakhetta she stopped on the bank of Lake Pkaravno, known also under the designations: Pkdrnav, Paraban, Pkanavar, and Tanaravan; from this lake flows out a river called the Mtkouar of Djavakhetta, from which are to be seen high moun-

tains covered with snow even during the summer months. They are the cause of much cold weather in all the neighboring towns and villages. Fear seized Saint Nina.

"O Lord!" she cried out, trembling, "accept my soul!" and she fell to the ground. For two whole days she could not master her fright nor continue her journey. At last hunger forced her to ask for food of some poor fishermen trading on the lake and of the shepherds who guarded their herds on the banks of the lake.

The latter often used to invoke their gods at night. These were called Armaz and Zaden, and the heathen inhabitants of the lake districts promised them rich sacrifices if they only guarded the herds from any possible evil. Hearing that their prayers were spoken in Armenian, to which Saint Nina was somewhat accustomed as she had served at Niapkhora's, she dared to ask them whither they had come.

"I am an Akovanian from Elrbienik on the banks of the Lopatsh-Tskan" (this is the left arm of the Alasana, Plin calls the inhabitants of this region Loubienis), said one of them.

"We are Kakhetines from Sapourtzle and Kindsar near Mouknar," murmured two others.

"But I am a Touissian from Rabatt," added a third one.

"Here is one from the great city of Mtzkhet, where there lives a Tsar and where we have temples of our gods; in summer we all drive our herds to the banks of the Pkarnav, thus saving ourselves from the unbearable heat of our countries. The reason that the lake has so many names is that each of us pronounces its name according to his own language. In the autumn we disperse to our many homes to escape the cold of this district."

"Where is Mtzkhet?" asked Nina with a fainting heart.

"This river unites itself with another one which comes from Kola, changes its name to Mtkonar and flows to Mtzkhet."

She looked at the sides of the river: it was an endless plain. She became frightened upon beholding its boundless limits. Having sighed over the great length of the coming journey, she put her head on a stone near the source of the river and fell asleep.

In a dream there appeared to her a man of middle height with flying hair, and handed her a written roll, which ran as follows: "Carry this in all haste to the idolatrous Tsar of Mtzkhet!" Saint Nina cried bitterly and began to implore and pray: "O Lord! I am a woman, an adventurer, uneducated, I am unable to say much; now how in the world am I to go into a strange land to heathen nations—to a mighty Tsar?"

Then the shining man unfolded the roll in which were written ten commandments as on the tablets of Moses, and gave them to St. Nina to read. She awoke with the roll in her hands. The following were the contents of the roll:

I: Amen—I say unto ye, go on then, for this testament will be proclaimed all over the world, will go from mouth to mouth, and hardly will it be known when documents will appear to commemorate the event.

II: Make no difference between men or women. III: As thou goest, instruct all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. IV: The world is the language of enlightenment and thy glory, O Israel! V: This good deed of heaven will be practised the world over. VI: He who accepts you, accepts Me and he who accepts Me accepts Him who glorified Me. VII: Mary loved the Lord exceedingly, for she always obeyed his commandments. VIII: Not cutting off the bodies of the murderers, the souls of those who are powerful shall not linger. IX: The speech of Jesus to Mary Magdalen: "Go, O woman, and announce my fraternity!" X: "Teach them to promptly and rigidly observe all these commandments and then I shall be with you, in all times and to the end of the world—Amen!"

Having read the roll, Saint Nina became convinced that this apparition came directly from the Lord. She ardently prayed that the Lord might soothe her, and committing herself to his will, she immediately followed the course of the river. At first it flowed towards the West through wild and sterile countries. The journey became still more terrible through the number of wild animals filling these deserts with their fearful roaring, but not one of them attempted to approach and touch the protégé of God. Only when the river turned to the East did they begin little by little to disappear. Driven on by fear she forgot exhaustion and went rapidly ahead, hardly stopping a minute to catch breath. Soon after the turn of the river Saint Nina overtook some travellers going to Ourbishi or Ouriat-Oubani (which means "Street of the Hebrews"), and joyfully followed them, but at Ourbishi a disappointment awaited her; instead of believers of the real God she found people who bowed down and adored fire, wood, and stone; her heart burned with indignation, but the Lord comforted her by instructing some Jews to give her a hospitable reception, which she made use of for about one month, when the following spectacle aroused her feelings:

She beheld a great crowd of people going towards Mtzkhet, and as she heard from her host that there were Hebrews there, she followed the people in the distance and thus happened to reach her point of destination upon the fête of Armaz. Before reaching the bridge near Mogontka this large crowd stopped like one man to bow down to the fire, and Saint Nina cried bitterly at the loss of such a large, large number of human souls, ransomed by the most precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the sixth of August, 324 A. D., on the day of the Transfiguration of the Lord, Saint Nina, according to tradition, accomplished her first wonder. Upon that day appointed for the fêting of the idol Armaz, it was the duty of the Tsar and Tsaritsa to take part in the ceremonies. From early in the morning numberless crowds of people,

like flowers in the field, filled the streets, shouting and hurrying, each one trying to excel his neighbor in ornamenting their respective houses with carpets, fine shawls and other such articles, all along the road by which the royal cortège was to pass. First there arrived the Tsaritsa Nana, surrounded by the wives and daughters of the aristocracy. She was followed by the Tsar with a numerous suite. Songs of praises and blessings were heard among the crowd of the nation. With great pomp the procession ascended the mountain to adore their god, who was cast of clean gold, while at his side there stood two inferior gods of silver, who wore gold cuirasses and in their aquamarine eyes had artifically made rolling emerald pupils. These last idols were of human proportions and inside of them a mechanism was hidden, through which their hands (in which there were sharp swords) cut down all those who dared to approach the chief god without making a sacrifice, or all those who adored other and foreign gods instead. On the Roman bridge, Saint Nina joined the procession.

"What in the world does all this mean?" she asked of a Jewess.

"This is the god of gods—Armaz, who calls the people to do him homage. No other idol can compare with him, because each of us puts on his best garment to-day and holds a flag in his hand as a sign of joyousness."

In the meantime the procession had reached its destination. The Tsar bowed down to the ground, surrounded by whole clouds of incense. The sacrificers offered their victims. The Tsaritsa, the nobility, innumerable hordes of people followed the example of their ruler to the greatest displeasure of the Saint, who with all her heart prayed to Him, who had made her glorious and lo! a short-breathed West wind came up, at first softly, then always stronger and stronger, and finally turned into an oragan.

Losing their breath and feeling choked, the Tsar ran away and the sacrificers and the nation too, but the orcano turned into a perfect rain of stones—not allowing even

half of those fleeing to seek shelter. Stones of such a size poured down that not every grown up man could raise them with both arms, and they continued to ransack the temple and idols, until all had been turned to ashes and dust.

The heathens fled in terror; this mountain, such a short time before so crowded with people, had now been totally cleared of men and upon it sat only Nina, who was not at all terrified by the fearful spectacle. She saw in this a new proof of the all mightiness of her own God, and under his powerful protection she quietly lay down and peacefully fell asleep on a huge block of stone.

The next day, by the order of the Tsar, one of the noblemen went to inspect the scene of the disaster of the preceding day. He beheld Saint Nina, concluded by her dress that she was a traveller from some distant land, and with customary Georgian hospitality, invited her to stop at his home. But his offer was by no means accepted by the Saint. She continued her journey along the banks of the river and finding on the road an eye of one of the gods, she took it along with her. Upon reaching the junction of the Koura and Aragva, where formerly there stood a town and a fortress, she resolved to take a rest and pass the night at that point of the cape, where till then there still remained the ruins of the church of Favora.

At that time beautiful, well-shaped, high birches grew there, with magnificent shady branches. They were planted by Tsar Bartom, who often rested in their shade; this custom was long observed by the nobility and well-known men and almost every sunny day some one from the aristocracy passed the day under the branches of the birches. On one of these trees Saint Nina painted a cross and lived under it in constant prayer till the twelfth of August. On that day came to refresh herself with the coolness of the famous trees, the lady of the royal court Krokhana with her servant, a Greek woman. The latter by the order of her mistress asked the Saint who

she was, what she was undertaking, and whether she did not need something. The Saint said that she was "Tevee," *i. e.,* a prisoner of war (which does not mean that she was a servant, as some writers out of pure ignorance expressed themselves in describing her life) and did not tell of her real extraction. Krokhana immediately invited her to follow her to the palace, but the Saint refused even this invitation.

Within three days, *i. e.,* on the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, she crossed the Mtkovar and entered the royal fruit gardens. Near the place where now stands the church of the Katholikoss (Patriarch) and a pillar erected by God, there lived in those times a guardian, whose wife Anastasia hastened to come out to meet the stranger. She embraced her like an old and dear friend, kissed her, washed off her dusty feet, rubbed her exhausted body with strengthening fragrant butter and having offered her bread and wine, asked her to take a rest and to recover after the long, long journey. Here the Saint remained nine months, frequently visiting Ourbishi, where some Hebrews lived, in the hope of finding out something more about the Lord's robe; and indeed the Lord blessed her attempts. She made the acquaintance of Abiatkar, the descendant of Elios, whom she quickly converted to Christianity together with all his family. "When she arrived," said Abiatkar in his tale, remembered in Georgian History, "I received a letter from Jewish priests in Antiochia, in which they expressed themselves thus":

"The Lord divided the kingdom of Israel into three parts, which were owned by the Romans, Armenians, and Barbarians. There will be no more prophets; all that he told us through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled, we are scattered all over the world and our fatherland is occupied by the Romans. O Jews! let us now weep with our nation, for we offended God, the Creator of all beings."

Looking over now the books in which Moses teaches

us: "each one who on earth calls himself God shall be put to death! Why is it possible then that we sinned in killing Jesus of Nazareth? We actually see that in ancient times, when our forefathers sinned before God and forgot Him, He lowered them to servitude and made them experience all the horrors of captivity; but when they turned again to Him and invoked Him, He saved them from need. From the scriptures we know that this happened seven times in ancient history. Now, then, when our fathers put their hands on the son of a poor woman, God deprived us of his mercifulness and support and lo! our government fell to pieces, we were separated from our temples and our nationality was forgotten. That was about three hundred years ago. The Lord does not hear our prayers and does not send us help, from which we conclude that perhaps this man was sent by God. Thus did they write me several times and aroused doubts in my soul, to explain which, I applied to Saint Nina. I asked her who was Jesus and why the Son of God became a simple man.

Then Saint Nina opened her mouth and from it flowed out words of life as abundantly as the waves in the depth of the sea. From her very mouth I found out everything contained by the Christian books, and she explained to me their profound meaning. I felt like a man aroused from sleep, like a madman coming back to his senses. She filled my heart with pity for our forefathers, made me convince myself in the truths of the New Testament, and from her words I indeed recognized in him Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crucified, resurrected, and having come with glory; nay, I understood that He was the one who had been promised to those believing. I saw many other wonders yet, accomplished by Saint Nina at Mtzkhet in my time, and together with my daughter Sidonia was converted and received the Holy Baptism, being cleansed of all wickedness. I received that which the prophet David had vainly wished: I heard a choir of voices glorifying the New Testament, the object of his sighing; and

we were favored with the permission to partake of the Holy Communion, of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb that perished for the sins of the world, the best and most compound of victuals. O Lord, strengthen this faith in my heart to my last breath! All that I shall after this relate, I myself heard, with my own ears from my mother, my father, or read in books, recording the words spoken by our ancestors."

After this follows the story already known to us about the robe. On the tomb of Sidonia under a huge cedar grew up a fragrant bush loaded down by a numberless quantity of flowers and leaves, and from its branches a whole bush was formed, under which Saint Nina let herself down, not knowing how near she was to the aim of her desires. All nights she passed here in prayer, and lo! in one of these sleepless nights of prayer a shining man appeared to her and, pointing to the fragrant bush, ordered her to take up some earth under it to use for healing the sick. The next morning as usual Anastasia came to her, offering her wine, bread, fruits, and cheese. Having noticed that her eyes were filled with tears, Nina asked her the cause, and so found out that both she and her husband were deeply grieved by the fact that they had no children and attributed this misfortune to Anastasia's illness. The Saint immediately applied holy earth and Anastasia was cured.

Let us now return to Abiatkar's tale. During that period Saint Nina saw one and the same dream three or four times in those few minutes in which she used to rest. A horde of blackbirds bathed itself in the river, came out of the water whiter than snow, and rushed towards a peach tree actually growing near her bush. In the apparition it appeared covered with wonderful buds and flowers. With great haste the birds gathered and all rivalled one another in bringing them to the Saint as to the owner of the garden; afterwards united around her in a circle and sang most marvellously.

The Saint related all these events to my daughter

Sidonia, who exclaiming very loud, expressed herself thus: "O Prisoner; thou that didst take off our chains! I know that thou art the reason of all that hath now taken place, that by thee we are made to discover and acknowledge the past spilling of the blood of the Heavenly Man, for that deed the Hebrews and their kingdom perished, they were deprived of their temples and a strange people took the place of their greatness. Jerusalem, O Jerusalem! how thou dost spread thy wings in order to protect under them nations from every part of the world, thy children only remained without shelter and are scattered one by one all over the earth! Now there comes to us here a woman, born in a foreign land, who makes over our whole kingdom!"

Then addressing the Saint, she said: "That, which thou sawest, clearly predicts to us that this place has been changed by thee into religious gardens, in which thy pupils and followers whitened by thee like birds will eternally gather heavenly fruits, singing praises and glorifying God!"

The Saint openly preached the message of Christ, telling the people that up till then they had been entirely misled. She pointed to the grape cross which had already accomplished many wonderful cures without applying any medicine, simply by holding it to the sick people. She was joined in her converting expedition by seven Jewish women whom she had baptized. Among them also my daughter Sidonia, and I myself helped them with all my strength, trying to deserve the glorious name of Paul, which the Saint had bestowed upon me upon my baptism. Knowing well the Jewish law, and being instructed by the Saint, it was easier for me to convert the unbelieving and some of them becoming rebellious, wished to assault me with stones; but Tsar Mirian sent out several of his attendants to deliver me from their arms, because the news of the glory of the wonders accomplished in Greece and Armenia came to him and so he did not prevent Saint Nina and her pupils from preaching the truth, which he sympathized with.

But the devil, who had for a long time raged against the true believers, won the heart of the Tsaritsa Nana, who kept her husband from becoming a Christian. The fasts, vigilance, and prayers of the Saint astounded the heathens and they frequently asked her the cause of such actions.

Filled with joy, she naturally took advantage of such moments to unceasingly preach to them the religion of Christ, and Anastasia and her husband zealously assisted her in such a time. Once they brought to the Saint a dying infant, whom all physicians considered absolutely incurable. The mother of the baby was a fierce adorer of idols and did not cease to injure the faith of Christ, and even prevented others from accepting the teachings of Saint Nina. Only the complete hopelessness forced her to apply to the wonderful girl.

"I am not educated in human science," said the Saint, "but the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I serve is strong enough to heal him."

And with these words she placed him on her foliage couch, on which, having knelt, she usually pronounced her long prayers and kept her almighty vigilance, and having crossed him with the vineyard crucifix, she sent him away, healthy and happy. But his mother, who now fervently believed in the Christian faith, loudly glorified the Lord Jesus Christ. A little later the Tsaritsa fell ill and they sent for the marvellous doctor to the palace.

"I cannot go into a heathen house and therefore request the Queen to come to me," was the answer of the Saint. Nana submitted. Her son Revv and some ladies of the court were obliged to carry her in their arms. Numerous crowds of people accompanied the procession with visible curiosity and concealed their dissatisfaction; but this dissatisfaction turned to excessive joy when she was cured and with tremendous attention did the crowds of heathens listen to Sidonia, who had educated the Tsaritsa in the true faith; after that she was baptized by Abiatkar and returned to her husband, a fervent Christian.

Here it will be opportune to tell why Tsar Mirian once upon a time was so much in favor of Christianity. Hardly any other monarch in the world could boast of such great success in war as Mirian; he conquered much and always had good luck, nowhere and never did he lose a single battle, and he justly deserved the term "the invincible." But that which seemed to all mere luck, was nothing less than the intention of God, leading him this road to learn the truth.

In the year 312 the Persian Tsar Sapor sent a messenger to Mirian with a proposal to unite their forces and jointly attack Greece. Mirian consented, and soon their army, the number of which the contemporaries compare with grass in the fields or the leaves of the trees, fell upon the Emperor Constantine, who did not dare to oppose himself, and with sorrow saw how they ravaged one Greek province after another.

The clergy encouraged its sovereign, assuring that the Lord would not let the unbelievers possess a Christian kingdom. A dream convinced Constantine still more in this idea. He hastened to become baptized and led his army by a flag on which was represented a cross of stars, surrounded, according to the apparition, with the words: "By this I conquer!"

Soon the handful of Christians conquered the hordes of heathens at Andriansora. Both tsars with the remainder of their troops were turned to flight and pursued by Constantine who, following them on their heels, invaded their dominions. The Persian Tsar, having abandoned his ally, ingloriously fled, but Mirian defended the towns and fortresses in Georgia until all his generals had perished; then he sent an embassy to Constantine with peace proposals.

Constantine, who feared a second invasion of the Persians, consented to peace only with the imperative condition that in case of a war with the Persians, Mirian should assist him with an army, but to make sure of the observance of this condition, he took Mirian's son Bakour

as a hostage. Mirian's failure in the war with Constantine, the incomprehensible fear which had forced him to turn to flight, him, Mirian, whom all considered fearless and invincible and who up to this time had known no fear, gave him an exalted opinion of that God whom Constantine worshipped, and he frequently thought about His incomparable mightiness. The wars in which he was allied with Trdat, had led him astray, although, after the war with Constantine and the disaster at the fête of Armaz his faith in the religion of the false gods was very much shaken, but the furious opposition of the Tsaritsa Nana made also this second deep impression vanish.

Now, however, when the newly converted woman wished to bring him to the light of truth, she was met with indifferent curiosity and cold inquisitiveness, instead of the former hearty interest. Mirian had already succeeded in forgetting that impression, which the victory of Constantine and complete fall of Armaz had produced upon him, he interrupted her fiery, persuasive speeches with the question how he came to see her healthy once more. The Tsaritsa spoke the truth. Her husband knew very well what a tremendous contrast there was between her experience and all then known means of curing, and he would not believe at all that the simple appliance of a cross could have as consequence a complete restoration to health. The court ladies, witnesses of the wonder, were then summoned to appear, and very naturally confirmed the words of the Tsaritsa. But the Tsar was not yet convinced.

It was then ordered that any one of the eye-witnesses should be called up, and lo! a whole crowd of people came to testify the truth of what had taken place. Among others there was also Abiatkar, to whose tale we shall now return: "The sovereign noticed me and began to inquire about the Christian teachings. He knew much in the Old and New Testament, and thus I had to explain rather than merely relate, and so it was easier to converse

with him than with the uneducated heathens. After that time he often sent for me.

"Once he told me that in the Book of Nebrotk the following version was written: 'During the construction of the tower of Kaskinie in the city of Khagkan (Babylon), Nebrotk heard a heavenly voice, which said to him: "I am Michael, to whom the Lord confided the administration of the East, go thou out of this town, for the Lord does not wish that thou shouldst see that which He hid from human eyes. Leave the building, for otherwise God will certainly destroy it. In the future there will come a Heavenly King, whom thou dost want to see, and although He will be hated by the cursed nation, the fear of His name will cleanse the earth of all sins, kings will renounce their thrones in order to live in poverty. He will look upon thee with mercy in disastrous times and will save thee!' "

I did my best to convince the sovereign that this is the confirmation of that which we have already read many a time in the Old and New Testaments. He agreed with me, but continued to adore the idols and the fire, notwithstanding the prayers of the Tsaritsa, who constantly persuaded him to be baptized. The devil held him still another year in his claws after Nana had been converted. On that account I could not convert even a single heathen, while Saint Nina daily converted dozens of people, untiringly preaching to the people the truth. She continued to pretend that she was a prisoner of war, not telling anyone whence she came and whither she intended to go. Much time went by, the Tsar interfered with the Saint and remained deaf and dumb to the prayers of the Queen; and the visits of Abiatkar did not lead to the desired result. He conversed whole hours with him and every time let him depart unpersuaded in the truth.

Once there arrived from Khorossan a courier of the Sossanid family, with messages from the Shah of Persia who suddenly fell ill. The Tsaritsa Nana sent for Saint Nina, who again refused to come to the house

of the idolatrous Tsar and requested the sick man to repair to her house. King Mirian, who was not yet fully convinced of the mightiness of the Christian God and had not entirely renounced his former religion, wished himself to accompany his dying guest, whom they bore in their arms.

"Through what power dost thou effect thy cures?" said the Tsar, turning to the Saint. "Art thou not a daughter of Armaz, dost thou not belong to the number of the descendants of Zaden, notwithstanding that thou callest thyself a stranger? Dost thou not secretly bow down before them and seek their moral support? And do they not give thee the power of healing, which nourishes thee wherever thou art? I know that thou didst convert people to the faith of a foreign God for the sole sake of trying their fidelity afterwards. Glory to our gods, who have disclosed the truth to me! I shall respect thee as I do the governess of my children and cover thee with honors in this mighty city, where thou didst hide thyself under the pretense of being a prisoner, but display no more before me and do not speak about the Christian faith.

"Our great gods only are the actual healers of the world! The sun shines because they illuminate it, they send down rain, give fertility to the earth and nourish blessed Georgia. Armaz and Zaden know all secrets. Gatz and Gaim, the ancient gods of our forefathers are worthy of the confidence of all mortals! If thou wilt cure this mtvar I will shower riches upon thee, make thee a citizen of Mtzkhet and a servant (mere priest) of Armaz. Although they (the idols) were destroyed by an unusual storm and hail of stones, yet the spot where we adored them did not perish. Ytkrondjan—the Chaldean God and our Armaz are constantly fighting. It is known that our god once directed the sea against his enemies and that is the reason why they now revenge themselves by letting this disaster occur just as the rulers of the earth constantly do. Carry thou out then, my order!"

"O King!" answered Saint Nina, "as the representa-

tive of our Lord Jesus Christ and the prayers of His All-holy Mother and all saints existing, I am sent by God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Father of all great and small beings, from man down to the last degrees of insects, through His indescribable mercy, like a piece of coal out of the stove of His goodness in order that thou shouldst learn to believe in and reach heavenly heights, the sunny world, the depths of the sea, earthly magnitude! Find out and acknowledge now thou, O Tsar, Him who covers the sky with clouds, who fills the air with the sound of thunder and shakes all creation, who lights up the sky with lightning, makes the tops of mountains slip off or turns them into volcanoes! Before His voice the foundations of earth tremble and mountains disappear like sea-waves! Know thou all this and admit thou the invisible God, living in heaven, who has sent His Son begotten of Him, to earth in the form of a mortal man, who having accomplished everything His Father wished Him to do, rose to Heaven in sublime glory. Dost thou not see that this, the eternal, only and true God looks after the needs of the humble and turns His face away from the proud? O Tsar! the time is already approaching when even thou shalt know and recognize God and verily shalt behold the wonder of light, which there is in this town. I am speaking of the Lord's robe; and the sheepskin of Illina, and many other treasures indeed, are hidden here, which God will point out to thee. I shall cure thy archimage just as I healed thy wife in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ and by the strength of His honest cross. The Tsaritsa already informed thee that she recovered from her illness only after she had sincerely renounced the idol-worship. Now her mind has broadened out and with ardor she does everything that is ordered in the Christian law—nay, that other people may learn from her righteous way of living!"

Then, upon the command of the Saint, they placed the image facing the East. The Tsaritsa fell down on her knees and began a prayer under the cedar while the Saint raised the hands of the sick man towards Heaven and ordered him to loudly repeat thrice:

"Renounce thou Satan! Bow thou down before my Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God!"

But from great weakness the sick man could not speak. Then the Saint began to implore God to restore him to health, with tears and great lamentations, and her pupils stood by her side.

One day and two nights she continued her prayers, and when at last the invalid had repeated the holy words for the third time, the badness of his soul suddenly abandoned him, he became a healthy man and a Christian, together with his family and servants and glorified the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost! Mirian began to fear the wrath and revenge of the Persian Tsar and wanted to have the Saint immediately executed—alone the desperate lamentations and tearful supplications of his beloved wife could cut short his anger, and dissatisfied, he decided to seek distraction in hunting. This is how Sidonia, daughter to Abiatkar, and pupil to Nina, relates the event:

"On Saturday, July the twentieth, a royal hunt was appointed in the direction of Mouknar. The devil disturbed the royal heart, awakening in him the old love for idols and fire, and so he firmly resolved to exterminate all Christians with the sword. Four of his nearest councillors accompanied him upon the hunt, and to them he turned and made the following speech:

" 'We are worthy to be punished by our gods for forgetting their glory and permitting Christian witches to preach their law and teachings in our country. Through their witchcraft they accomplish wonders, but not at all by the might of their God. I have now made up my mind that all those who pay homage to and adore the Crucified shall perish by the sword, and furthermore, I insist that an effort shall be made to increase the love of serving the gods, the real rulers of Kartla (the native word for Georgia). I shall propose to my wife to abandon the faith of the Crucified, and if she doth not fulfil my order, I shall forget her love for me and have her

put to death with the rest!'" With joyfulness the heathens listened—it seemed to them as though the monarch's speech had come out of their own hearts. They had long reflected about such an event, but did not dare to express their thoughts, knowing the attachment of the sovereign for his wife. Now they strongly supported his views and encouraged him in his actions.

In the meantime they had already passed Moukkvar and Mirian ascended the high mountain Tekkhotk (in Armenian Tkakoutk) in order to look at Kaspii and Ouplis Tzikke. When, however, he reached the tiptop, although this was just at noon, the sun suddenly disappeared before his eyes and day turned to night. An impenetrable fog covered all the surroundings and the Tsar himself not noticing this, rode a long way off from his followers. An unusual thought weighed upon him.

Surprised, he wished to ask whether all the rest were also in the fog or whether he alone was dazzled, but nobody answered his questions. In vain he rode over the mountains covered with bushes, his horse constantly stumbled and fell, the trees scratched his face and tore his clothes, the Tsar was involuntarily trembling, while his exhausted and tortured horse at last succumbed to fatigue and rose no more, thus depriving its reckless rider of any hope of saving his life. Then he remembered his former doubts and understood Whose hands were pushing him down.

"I called to the gods, but they did not help me!" he exclaimed. "Now I shall turn to Him who was crucified on the cross, whom Nina preached about and with whose help she succeeds in healing men. Is He not strong enough to deliver me from this disaster? I am already fully in the darkness of terrible sin and do not know whether this darkness has come for all, or whether I alone am punished with blindness.

"If Thou wilt save me, God of Nina, then I pray to Thee, lighten up darkness and show me where my palace stands! I will accept the religion of Thy name, I will

erect and glorify the wooden cross, I will build a temple of prayer, following the teachings of Saint Nina, and become a true Christian."

With hearty and sincere repentance in his heart, he swore to become a Christian, and hardly had he succeeded in closing his lips when his eyes opened. The sun shone for him with all its gloriousness, he climbed off the fallen horse and stopping at the place where he had had the vision, he raised his hands towards the East and exclaimed:

"Thou art the King of kings and the God of gods announced and proclaimed by Saint Nina! Let Thy name be glorified by all people in Heaven and on earth. Thou didst deliver me from peril and didst open my eyes; now I found out that Thou wishest to save, comfort and draw me towards Thee, according to the words of Thine archangel. Blessed be the Lord! On this spot I shall erect a cross, yes, I will glorify Thy holy name and let the remembrance of this marvellous event be kept upright for centuries and centuries to come." Having taken precise notice of the spot he went away, but in the meantime his attendants, who had been everywhere vainly looking for him, came together to discuss what was to be undertaken next.

"Yes, let all my nation glorify the God of Nina!" suddenly rang out the Tsar's voice, "for He is the Eternal God and to Him alone is due glory from century to century!"

They gave a fresh horse to the King and he rode home very happy, and best of all—both mentally and physically cured!

In the meantime the Tsaritsa had already heard the report that Mirian had disappeared and a little later she received news that he was already returning. With great haste she rushed out to meet her beloved husband and an innumerable crowd of people followed after her. They arrived together at Kindsa, which lies in Gkartk.

As to Saint Nina, she was pronouncing her usual prayer in the rose bush, and several of us were there

with her. Gradually as the Tsar approached the whole nation began to be greatly moved and excited, because he shouted in a loud voice:

"Where is the stranger, who, from now on, will be my mother, because her God saved me from death?"

Having found out already that she was praying, the Tsar branched off on a side road and his suite followed him. Before reaching the rose bush Mirian left his horse and coming up to the Saint, he humbly bowed to her, saying:

"Now make me worthy of invoking thy God, who has indeed been my saviour!"

Having taught him a little, Nina on the very spot ordered him to bow down towards the East and adore the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the people, who did not understand the point of the whole affair, began to be rebellious, seeing the Tsar and Tsaritsa humbly kneeling.

On the next day Mirian dispatched ambassadors to Rome to the Emperor Constantine, with a request to speedily send some priests to baptize the nation, and with a letter from Saint Nina to the Empress Helena, informing her of the wonders which had been performed on Tsar Mirian near Mtzkhet, through the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ. The day the Tsar was converted the Saint sent to Saint Gregory Nansien asking for instructions as to what she should do next. By his advice she personally destroyed the new idol Armaz, which they had already succeeded in placing on a mountain beyond the Koura, and to which the people daily bowed at sunrise, climbing up to the roofs of their houses and turning their faces towards the sun. In its place she erected a cross on a hill near Mtzkhet, beyond the river Aragva. But as this cross was roughly made, the people kept away from it until the Lord had glorified it. While expecting the arrival of priests, the Saint and her followers preached the word of God day and night, untiringly preparing the nation before being baptized, and they went from Klard-

jet to the land of the Alanes and from the Caspian gates to the land of the Massajettians, while the remaining pupils of the Saint spread all over Georgia.

The Tsar had already become an active and energetic Christian before the return of the ambassadors. He said to the Saint: "I am burning to construct a house of God, let us now choose the site!"

"Let thy mtavares (provincial governors) solve that question and have it arranged so that thou and the nation will draw the utmost profit out of it," replied Saint Nina.

"No!" said the King, "I love thy rose bush and wish to sacrifice everything in order to erect a temple on that spot. I shall have my vineyards, great cedars, fruit trees, and fragrant flowers cut down. Dost thou not remember how in thy vision the black birds became so white that it was blinding, and having perched themselves on the vineyard trees, filled the air with heavenly songs? Now we will turn this visible vineyard into an invisible one, giving us eternal life, and let us build in it a house of worship and prayer before the arrival of the Greek priests!"

Immediately they began to get the materials together. For the church seven pillars were necessary. Thereupon a great cedar was cut down which furnished six pillars, while the seventh was made out of a large pine. When the wooden walls had been erected they fixed the six pillars, each one in a place specially prepared for it, while the seventh, which was unusually large and was meant for the cupola, they could by no means lift from the ground. They hastened to report this to the Tsar, who ordered all the people to make for the building, and he himself went there too. In this affair all then known means of raising weights were used, but neither the numberless arms, nor any possible art could succeed in obtaining the desired result. And Tsar and people asked each other with the greatest surprise: "What can this mean?" And having labored till night they went back to their houses in great sorrow. Saint Nina, however,

with twelve of her followers, remained by the pillar, washing it with her tears and praying and groaning. About midnight a terrifying vision began; we saw how the mountains of Armaz and Zaden were trembling as though somebody were shaking them in order to block up the course of both rivers. Mtkouar returned and inundated the town, by reason of which the air was filled with cries, lamentations and groaning, while the Aragva flowed towards the fortress and its waves dashing against the fortress walls, made such a fearful noise that we ran away in terror, but the Saint shouted:

"Do not be afraid, sisters, the mountains still stand in their places and the rivers have not altered their course, and the nation quietly sleeps. Although that which you beheld did not happen in reality, yet this was not a mere dream, for the mountains of unbelief were thoroughly shaken up in Georgia, for the rivers of innocent children's blood, which flowed in honor of the idols, dried up, for legions of demons, chased out of this region by the mightiness of the Cross are pitifully combatting, seeing how their waves of wrath cannot carry out anything nor harm the fortress of Christ's faith. Come back and let us pray!"

Then all these sounds quieted down and everywhere one could distinguish silence once more. The Saint stood up with raised hands and prayed that what had been begun by the Tsar should not be destroyed. But before dawn the vision repeated itself, and this time more terrifying than ever: it seemed as though an immense and terrible army had attacked the city from three different sides.

Having forced the gates open it completely filled the streets. Everywhere a fearful emotion had spread, shrieking and murdering took place. Pools of blood flowed at every corner. In some places the people threw themselves upon the enemy with arms in their hands; some of them from terror and confusion turned against their own countrymen. Here one was killing the other

—there a second one was expiring, a third one's heart was perfectly broken by the lamentations of his family. Suddenly a loud, loud voice was heard:

"The Persian Tsar Kkhouara! The king of kings Kkhouaran Kkhouara has ordered that the sharpness of the sword should spare the Jews!" Only upon hearing this cry did I begin to come back to my senses, but just like ten of my companions, I could not exactly remember how affairs stood. We were still imagining warriors turning around us with swords in their hands, who knocked down and killed everybody and everything. And once more a cry was heard: "Tsar Mirian is taken!"

Then the brave worker of Christ's vineyard said: "I know that he who is shouting is in great distress. Give thanks unto God, for the enemy is overcome and Georgia saved, and this very place too!" She cheered us up like an experienced doctor, like a sincere teacher, like a great apostle! Afterwards fearlessly throwing herself upon this regiment of robbers and destroyers, she angrily asked them:

"Where then is the Persian King Kkhoua and Kkhouaran-Kkhonafa? Only yesterday you left the land of Sab and hurried hither with a terrible and most numerous army in order to destroy the city and exterminate the inhabitants. Ye Northern and Western winds, chase them away into the dark mountains and bottomless precipices, for He arrived before whom you turn to flight!"

With these words she raised her hand and made the sign of the cross.

Instantly all fell to pieces and were swept off, great silence set in and we all began to congratulate her upon the glorious victory and thank God for the happy and favorable end of such a terrible vision and for His revealing to the Saint through this event the future flourishing state of the country. When, however, it began to grow light, the other women fell asleep, while I, Sidonia, could see how the Saint continued praying, raising her hands to Heaven. Suddenly there stood before her a

youth, shining with indescribable brightness, dressed in a fiery-blazing garment and said three words to her, from which the Saint fell down with her face on the ground. The youth stretched out his hands towards the pillar, raised it and put it in the right place. In my astonishment I approached and asked: "Why, mistress, what is this?"

"Bow down thy head!" she replied, and wept from fear. A little later she rose, ordered me to get up too, and we left this place together.

In the meantime our sisters had waked up and actually saw that the pillar, which had seemed to them enveloped in flames, was coming down from Heaven and was approaching its destination. When it was within twenty loktays of the ground it stopped. Hardly had daylight appeared when the Tsar, tortured with impatience and anxiety, hastened to the building which he was burning to see finished. From a distance it seemed to him that the strokes of lightning were rising to Heaven. He hurried on. In the end, unable to conquer his curiosity, he actually ran. His whole suite and innumerable hordes of people rushed after him, doing their best to speedily reach and help to put out the fire in the burning edifice, and lo! a wonderful spectacle now presented itself to the eyes of all present.

The extraordinary illumination was not caused by a fire as supposed: it came from the pillar, blazing with light. Softly did it come down from Heaven, supported by the arms of two angels, placed itself in the right spot, and was firmly fixed without the help of human hands. O, how great was the general delight! Happiness and emotion spread all over Mtzkhet.

The Tsar, Tsaritsa, dignitaries, and people without distinction of rank or class, shed tears of emotion, all glorified God and praised Saint Nina, for great wonders were accomplished on that day. In the first place a blind-born Hebrew, who approached the pillar, which had been placed by God, began to see. Secondly, the sepetsouli

(*i.e.*, page) Kha Mazaepouki had been entirely paralyzed for eight years. His mother took him in his bed and had it carried to the shining pillar, afterwards turning to Saint Nina, she said in an imploring voice: "Look, O mistress, at my dying baby, I know that He about whom thou dost preach is the God of gods!"

Then the Saint moved up to the pillar and having put her hand on the boy, said to him: "Thou dost believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who hath come to save the world? Be healthy and from this very day on glorify God, who hath cured thee!" And the boy got up in perfect health, and Tsar and nation were seized with fear. All the sick hastened to the spot and were healed, but as many could not stand the wonderful light coming out of the pillar, the Tsar ordered to have it covered with wood, which, nevertheless, of course did not prevent the people from approaching the pillar and getting cured.

The work of completing the church was immediately taken in hand, and it was arranged so that the pillar should be left in its above mentioned place. In the meantime the ambassadors of Tsar Mirian had already related to the Emperor Constantine and the Empress Helen, his mother, about the conversion of their sovereign to the faith of the true God, and this filled their hearts with joy, for Mirian offered them his friendship and help in conquering and destroying the Persians.

They hastened to send Bishop John (upon the advice given by the Antiochian patriarch Evstafii) and with him two priests and three deacons. Upon this occasion Constantine wrote a letter of congratulation to Mirian, filled with blessings and expressions of thankfulness to God, and sent him some gorgeous presents, but above all an invaluable gift—namely: the image of Rouiz with five hundred pieces of holy relics. The Empress Helen also wrote a letter in which she highly praised the resolution of Mirian and encouraged him. The arrival of the bishop, priests, and deacons at Mtzkhet was a day of general feasting, for Tsar as well as people were equally thirsting to be baptized.

Immediately a proclamation was sent to all the kristavs, military commanders, and dignitaries of the monarchy to gather around the Tsar, and all started for Mtzkhet. Thereupon began the general baptizing: Saint Nina baptized the Tsar and the priests the Tsaritsa and princes.

Bishop John on the other hand blessed the Mtkouar, and together with the deacons having found a place near the bridge Mogoutka, opposite the house of the priest Elios, he baptized in these waters all dignitaries and courtiers; that is the reason why this spot is called Mtkavartka-Sanatklavi, *i. e.*, "the place where the Mtkavares were baptized."

Farther down the river, both priests, the deacon and the bishop, after having baptized the nobility and dignitaries, baptized the people, who hurried towards them as much as possible—begging to quickly receive the great favor. Just so the prophecies of St. Nina, who was constantly and uninterruptedly repeating to them that he who does not let himself be baptized, would never behold the real light, awakening in them the greatest enthusiasm. Thus nearly all Georgians and fifty Hebrew families from the house of Varrava were christened.

To the Hebrew-Christians the Tsar granted the suburb of Tsikhe Dide. This was in the year 327.

Alone the mountain inhabitants and Mirian's brother-in-law, Pkeros, who had received the province of Ran as a dowry from his bride, beginning from Bard, did not pay attention to the Tsar's summons and remained heathens, having respectfully remarked to the Tsar that his power over them could not be extended to their form of religion. When, through His great mercifulness, the Lord deigned to show to the holy Tsaritsa His living cross, Tsar Mirian hastened to send to the Emperor Constantine the Bishop John, asking him for a piece of the wood of the holy living cross. To this request he joined the wish to have many priests, in order to send them out not only into all provinces, but also to each

single city of his government to educate, enlighten, and baptize the people all over Georgia.

At that time an invitation was also sent to architects, for it took a great many to erect and establish churches throughout the kingdom. The Emperor received the ambassador with great rejoicing and handed him the pieces of the holy living wood on which had lain the holiest legs of the Saviour of the world, and two nails from the Lord's hands. The pieces of the holy living wood are called Nerkveli in Georgian. Emperor Constantine handed great riches to Bishop John, ordering him to erect a church with this money in the newly converted country, but to divide up the remaining treasures among the other Georgian churches. He also sent with him many priests and architects and having flattered and complimented the envoy and bishop, allowed them to start for home.

Having reached the province of Eroushatk, they left there one architect and a priest, ordering them to establish and erect a church, and giving them the necessary sum for that undertaking. The priest besides was given charge of the most holy nails, which were to be kept in this temple. When they again arrived at Mangliss, they did the same thing, leaving the holy Nerkvelis, and then soon reached Mtzkhet. But Mirian, who had been awaiting their arrival with such impatience, was deeply grieved by the fact that they had been staying out longer on the way than he had expected them to do, and besides —had left in the provinces both invaluable holy relics; but Saint Nina comforted him by the following words: "Quiet down, O Tsar! It was necessary that everywhere on their route they should proclaim and firmly establish the name of the Lord—while thou in the grand capital art in possession of quite as great a treasure, viz., the robe of the Lord!"

Then the Tsar sent for Abiatkar, and with him came quite a large number of Jews. When, however, he asked them questions about the robe they related how it was

under the wonder-working pillar and added to this the whole report of Sidonia, which we have already told.

"Blessed be Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God!" exclaimed the Tsar, raising his hands toward Heaven, "merciful and charitable in saving us from the devil and the land of darkness and having built this church, nay, having brought Thy robe hither from the most holy city of Jerusalem to spare it from the hands of the Jews, who hath not acknowledged Thee and to hand it over to our care, to a foreign and strange nation, honoring and fearing Thee with all their heart!"

Immediately the church was begun, first commencing with the court. "Let the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed," said then Saint Nina, "and of God the Father, who hath sent His son, who leaving the all-shining heavenly regions, came down to earth, was without doubt born of the seed of David, of the branch of Joachim, of the most holy and most pure Virgin and her thou didst make the cause of our salvation, earthly enlightenment and glory of Thy people O Israel! Of her was born the God man, the light of all believing, the image of God, baptized with water and with the Holy Ghost, was crucified and interred, rose on the third day—going up to His Father, whither he comes with glory, for He is worthy of all glory, honor, and adoration, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost now, henceforth and evermore! Amen."

When all were really and successfully baptized, the royal son Revv reminded them about the famous tree, which grew in the court and had a marvellous power to heal even the most desperate mortal wounds. It was noticed more than once that even the snakes, when wounded by mortal shots, if they ate the leaves of this tree or the buds falling from it, immediately were healed.

Having found out about this, Bishop John said: "This land was really and truly destined by God to have the holy faith introduced in it, and by His godly attention this marvellous tree grew up and was preserved to

our days. Now, however, when the might of Christ had been spread all over Georgia, it does seem advisable to make a cross out of it, which will be an object of veneration for the whole country!"

And so, on Friday the twenty-fifth of March, three hundred and thirty A. D., the Tsarevitch Revv, together with the bishop and masses of people, set forth to cut down the tree, the branches of which, notwithstanding that it was in the winter season, were quite green. This tree was so beautiful that having cut it only slightly, one hundred men took it up in their arms together with its branches and leaves and carried it into the town, where they placed it near the church.

To the general astonishment it really kept its freshness and beauty during thirty-seven days, as though it had been replanted with a root or been constantly refreshed by living water. When, however, all the bushes were covered with leaves and the fruit trees with flowers, on the first of May, a Saturday, Tsar and people entered the church and with ardor and joyfulness made crosses out of it. The following day at sunrise a cross of stars descended from Heaven, and having let itself down to the church, seemed to have turned itself into a crown of stars which remained visible to the whole nation until sunset. Then two stars started forth from it: one flew towards the East and the other towards the West, while the cross, keeping its heavenly glitter and beauty, quietly directed itself to the spring which had been created by the tears of Saint Nina, and having gone up by the river Aragva to a stony plateau, rose to Heaven. As this vision repeated itself daily and was seen by all the people, the Tsar asked the Saint to explain its reason.

"Send thou," she said, "into the highest mountains in the East and West, to follow up and watch the direction which the stars take and, there where they stop we shall each time erect a cross to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The Tsar lost no time in ordering guards placed on the summits of the mountains. This was on Friday, and

Saturday, according to custom, at sunrise the wonder again repeated itself. The next day arrived the men who had been keeping guard on the Kvobtka-Tkavv, and said to the Tsar:

"The star stopped just above the mountain Tkkot and then went down into the Caspian Sea and disappeared." But others who had also kept guard on the Keretk, said:

"We beheld a star which came straight to us and stopped in the village of Bode." Thereupon Saint Nina said:

"Take both these crosses and establish one on the mountain Tkkot as God hath instructed ye, while the other ye shall give to the servant of God—Salome, who will plant it in the town of Oudjarmo, because Bode or Bondi is a simple hamlet with few inhabitants and thus should not be put on a footing with a capital, which has a large population, and so Bondi, too, will soon see that it is a place pleasing to God." The words of the Saint were most punctually and correctly carried out on the seventh of May.

In consequence of the marvellous heavenly apparition, a third cross, taken up by men and preceded by Saint Nina, was solemnly carried to the foot of the stony pleateau.

There the Saint, the King, and the people passed a whole night praying at the spring which had been created by the tears of Saint Nina. At that spot many wonders and cases of healing took place too. The day following they ascended the mountain to the top of the rocky plateau (now known by the designation Djouar), the Saint gave the example and after her Tsar and people, rich and poor, the prominent and religious fell down with their face resting on the ground and prayed to God with many tears and great lamentations, so that the mountains were filled with the sounds of crowds praying. Then the Saint, having put her hand upon the stone, said to the bishop:

"Come thou and make the sign of the cross on this stone."

As soon as the Saint's command had been executed, the holy cross was well fastened to a rock by the hands of the Tsar and his family. Innumerable crowds of people bowed down before the cross, praising and blessing the Son of God and believing with all their hearts and souls in Him and in the Holy Trinity. Even the most distinguished Mtavares did not leave the holy church, the fiery pillar and the holy cross, and were witnesses of the perfectly unusual wonders and most marvellous cures.

The Sunday of the Easter Full-moon was chosen by Mirian for celebrating the holy cross, and this custom was observed all over Georgia up to the governor-generalship of Yermolow.

On the first Wednesday after the fête of the Holy Trinity, a new wonder occurred. A fiery cross showed itself above the cross on Mount Djuarr, while above it there seemed to be a crown, consisting of twelve stars. Besides, the mountain gave out an indiscribable fragrance. This vision was seen by everybody, and many of the unbelieving were baptized on that memorable day, while the faith of the Christians was very much strengthened, and they loudly glorified God. At the cross still another wonder took place. A light seven times brighter than the sun was lowered from Heaven unto the cross and angels went up and down this apparently fiery road—as the sparks fly from the bursting crater. Even the very mountain was shaken as though a strong earthquake were taking place during the wonderful apparition.

This wonder called forth general surprise, and all those present praised God more and more, and as such wonders repeated themselves daily before the eyes of the whole nation, people from every town and village of the kingdom streamed in to bow to the cross. At that time the Tsarevitch, a grandson of Mirian and the only son of the crown prince Revv, was taken with a hopeless illness, but his father placed him in front of the cross and with tears in his eyes, said:

"If thou, O holy cross, wilt heal my son, I will erect a shrine for thee!"

And the child came back to life and was taken home by his father—restored to perfect health. The Tsarevitch immediately returned with the greatest joy in order to thank God and begin to carry out his solemn promise. Soon a marble chapel was built, into which Revv daily came to give thanks unto God, and used to bring rich gifts. Ever since that moment a still greater number of the weak and sick were attracted by the holy cross, and having been cured, they joyfully glorified our Lord Jesus Christ and the strength of His honorable cross. A blind youth who had fasted for fully seven days and had been praying as long before the cross, got back his sight and glorified God.

A woman who had the misfortune of having the devil in her for eight whole years, was deprived of the power of reasoning and here tore her clothes to pieces and became idiotic—there became greatly weakened. For twelve days they held her in front of the cross; in the end the Lord healed her and she returned home, healthy in body and soul, lauding God and honoring His holy cross. It happened that a little baby fell from a certain height and was instantly killed. His mother put the breathless corpse near the foot of the cross and from morning till evening unceasingly prayed with tears constantly in her eyes.

"Woman!" they said to her, "take him away and bury him, for he is dead, and thy prayers will be of no use!"

But she continued praying and loudly lamenting without giving up hope throughout the night, the next day and a third day, and lo! to the seventh day.

On this seventh day, however, in the evening, the baby came back to life and was carried off living and healthy by his mother, who did not cease to praise and thank God. Such great wonders persuaded many fruitless husbands to resort to the strength of the holy cross, and having begged with real faith, they became the fathers

of numerous families and daily came to adore the cross and bring gorgeous presents. Not only the sick who personally came to pray at the foot of the cross were successfully cured, but also the warriors combatting far, far away from Djouar, if they only implored the help of the cross, became able to defeat their enemies and unharmed returned to Mtzkhet to justly glorify God. Many infidels, when in great need, addressed the cross with prayers and receiving salvation from destruction, hastened to Djouar to give thanks unto God and be baptized. Besides these already mentioned, masses of other suffering people were healed and the unhappy comforted by invoking the holy cross, created by the almightiness of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and to them is due all glory, honor, and veneration, now, henceforth, and evermore. Amen.

At that time Saint Nina, the Tsar, and the nation received a message from the patriarch from Rome. Just then, too, arrived a deacon from the land of the Brandjees in order to congratulate Saint Nina and ask her to pray for them. He also brought a letter from his Tsar to Saint Nina, whose father had baptized all Brandjees. At Jerusalem and Constantinople a report was spread that the sun of truth was now shining in Georgia and Jee— from all possible regions they sent letters asking to give precise details of the wonders which had happened at the pillar and the rose bush and of the extraordinary cases of cures. Having carefully inquired about all this, the brandja-deacon glorified God and went home with numerous letters containing the longed for statements. Then the Tsar spoke thus to the Saint and the bishop:

"It is my wish with the power of the sword to force the mountain inhabitants as well as my brother-in-law Pkheros to serve the Son of God and to oblige them to venerate and respect the honest cross!"

"God doth not order thee to convert them with the sword!" was their unanimous answer. It is thy duty to convert them after having pointed out to them with the

help of the New Testament and the cross—the road of truth leading to life eternal and how to be thankful to the Lord, who lightens up the terrible darkness of their souls.

Saint Nina, together with the bishop, left for the mountain regions, and the Tsar ordered the kristav (most likely district governor) to accompany them. Upon arriving at Tsorbanne, they called together the mountaineers, inspected Dsrbin, Tchartal, Tkkhela, Tsilkammy, and Gorangor. They assembled the Tchartalians, who were almost like wild beasts, the Fkholians, the Gondamakavians, and to all these tribes they preached about the holy cross of Christ. But they did not want to listen, and so the royal kristav drew his sword and destroyed their idols and subjected them.

From there they went into Yaletia (the present Mtaletka) and taught the nations of Tionet and Ertso (in Armenian Erdzoitk), who received them well and were baptized, but the Fkholis (nowadays the Pchaves), settled over to Doushet. The remaining mountain inhabitants also refused to become Christians, for which the Tsar doubled their taxes and thus forced them to emigrate. It is true later on, Saint Avive, bishop of Nekretsa, converted several of them to Christianity, while the rest are even to this day infidels. Saint Nina started for Ranne in order to enlighten Pkeros, but as she approached Kouket and reached Bondi, she was obliged to make a longer stop. Kakhetians streamed there in great number, questioned her and many became persuaded in the correctness and truthfulness of her teachings. At Bondi, however, she fell ill. Hardly had the news of this deplorable event reached Revv and Salome, who lived at Oudjarmo, when they hastened to the Saint and also informed the Tsar and Tsaritsa. The sovereign gave orders that Bishop John should bring over the Saint, but she really preferred to remain where she was, and so the Tsar set out for Bondi with a numerous suite.

The whole nation rushed to the invalid, whose glance

was illuminated with true heavenly brilliancy. With love and veneration did the true believers cut off little bits of pieces from her garment and covered their souvenir with kisses. The Tsaritsa and the princesses crowded around her, showering blessings upon her, and with tears and sorrow they looked forward to their separation from their teacher, protector, and healer. The Princess Salome, Kherosh Avrizounelle (in Armenian Perojavr Sounetsi), the kristaves and mtavares began to implore the Saint to relate her life to them, saying:

"Who art thou? How didst thou come into our kingdom to save us? Who was thy instructor? O mistress, do let us know the history of thy life! Why shouldst thou speak of captivity—O thou happy, happy Tsaritsa, who hast delivered us from the burdens of captivity? For through thee we found out that the Son of God had been predicted by prophets, that after Him the work of spreading the new faith was carried out by twelve apostles, and as many as seventy-two pupils. But of all this immense number, thou alone wert given and sent unto us by God. Why in the world dost thou then call thyself a prisoner and foreigner?" Then the Saint continued:

"Children of the Faith, Tsaritsa and princesses—all ye who are surrounding me, I now see that you may be compared with the ancient women in their faith and love to Christ. You desire to know the biography of His insignificant servant. I consent, for I feel that my end is approaching and I shall sleep the eternal sleep in which she who gave birth to me is already resting. Take ye then the inkstand and write up the history of my life, so that your children shall discover how great your faith in God was, how constant and unchangeable your love to me and what wonders you were allowed to be witnesses of."

Then the Princess Salomee and Kherosh Avrizounelle began to record the events, while the Saint related to

them all that we have here undertaken to describe. She advised the Tsar to replace Bishop John by the priest Jacob when the time should come. John held a final mass, and Nina received from his hands the Holy Communion, after which she gave up her most righteous soul to the Lord of Heaven and earth, in the fifteenth year after her arrival in Georgia, in the year of our Lord three hundred and thirty-nine. Her death caused great sorrow and mourning in Mtzkhet and Oudjarmo. They buried her at Bondi (the present Sidjack) in accordance with the sworn oath which she had received from the Tsar. As this was at that period a little known and unimportant village, the Saint had evidently chosen it from extreme humility. The Tsar and his noblemen were deeply grieved by this choice, but of course did not venture to oppose her last will.

V. The Diamond

A LEGEND

At the time of Tsar Artchill the First, who was married to Marion, the daughter of the Greek Emperor Julian (363 A. D.), many Greeks settled over into Georgia, among them the painter Martin. To his care the inner ornamentation of the church of Stephan Tsminda (*i.e.,* of Saint Stephen) was left. This great house of worship had been planned and constructed at Mtzkhet by the all honorable Artchill, near the gates of the Aragva, near the towers and bastions erected in its neighborhood for national defence. Martin was a perfectly honorable and reliable man and very clever and gifted in the execution of his orders. The paints which were at his disposal assumed such a marvellous, nay overwhelming resemblance with reality, that several of the saints represented by them appeared as though they were alive, and astounded faithful and esteemed believers

many hundred years after his death. On one of the walls he had undertaken to reproduce the apparition of the most Holy Virgin to Saint Nina. The latter was seen down on her knees stretching out her arms and receiving a holy cross made of fine vineyard branches. The fear, happiness, love to God and perfectly boundless submission to His holy will were expressed not only in the character features of the Saint, but in every movement, nay, in every fold of her garment. The union of all these various thoughts was above picturesque sciences and naturally called forth the amply justified astonishment of the contemporaries of Martin and of the very latest visitors to the temple. Yes, indeed, the Greek Martin was a great, great artist. And therefore he loved his art so much that it seemed dearer to him than all the world put together, with the exception of his daughter Poullkheria.

At the period when our tale begins, the portrait of Saint Nina was already carefully finished off, and the artist was applying himself over the figure of the most Holy Virgin. As humble as he was clever and ingenious, he alone, it appeared, did not notice the beauty of his productions, and while just then all those standing about were filled with amazement and extreme delight, he sighed while comparing his master works with those shining, marvellous, indescribable, and exceptionally extraordinary pictures which his poetic imagination seemed to behold moving as it were in the air, and which were so dear to his elevated soul. How in the world should he represent the features of the most Holy Virgin?

That was a question which tortured him day and night. Every time he reflected about them he thought he could see the sweet, short, dear face of his daughter, and with terror in his heart he attempted to drive away this imaginary apparition. It seemed to him like some wicked, harsh, impossible insult. Again he did his best to find a proper type which would have nothing earthly about it, and once more that same loving and beloved

little face of Poullkheria presented itself to him. At last in perfect despair he went to the Katholikoss (this fully corresponds to the rank of a patriarch), John the Second, imploring counsel and prayer. One day and two nights they fervently prayed together near the holy djouar (thus was named the place near the fountain of tears of Saint Nina, not far from the cross erected in that very vicinity; djouar in reality means cross). On the second morning the Katholikoss ordered the painter to immediately return to his home.

"Lay thyself down at the feet of our great converter," said he, "and go to sleep, for I do heartily believe that in a dream thou art destined to see namely those features in which the most Holy Virgin must be represented!"

Martin went to the place appointed, fulfilled the command of John, and a third time saw the features of Poullkheria; she appeared to him with some especially magnificent heavenly radiance.

"But how shall I reproduce this astonishing light?" murmured the painter, and began to strictly observe the fasts and pray like the ancient prophets and other true servants of the Lord. For a whole week he constantly went through all the different religious services and ate nothing, nor did he drink anything. On Saturday, after partaking Communion, he took a meal and lay down with the intention of sleeping under the portrait.

In the dream he beheld already the heavenly Tsaritsa, viz., just as it was customary and necessary to reproduce her. Hastily he jumped up and drew out on the wall with charcoal the all glorious and all impressive picture. This was the very first representation of the kind, and it completely satisfied and pleased the artist himself! The worry which had long been weighing down on him was changed into inexpressible happiness and good fortune, and he hurried to the holy djouar (cross) where with tears he thanked and sang praises unto God. The following day just at sunrise Martin rose, awoke Poullkheria and led her off with him. Hardly had he arranged

her as was his desire, when an unknown youth came up to them.

"Old man!" he said, respectfully bowing, "I also want to work on the image of the Heavenly Queen, instruct me how it is necessary to dispose of thy colors." With great incredulity Martin stared at him. The gorgeous garment, the graceful movements showed plainly that he was a man not accustomed to hard labors. "It is not at all easy to teach how to apply the colors," he answered. "Take off thy expensive and most elegant robe and thy delicate hands will not stand difficult, exhausting work." The youth nevertheless insisted, and Martin having rapidly explained to him what to do, began the work and soon forgot him and Poullkheria and all creation, and was utterly absorbed in his magnificent inner world. In the meantime Poullkheria followed the newcomer. He was a tall, well-built, handsome youth, broad-shouldered with a slender waist, which was pinched in by a fine gold belt with decorations of highly precious stones, and how these various-colored stones played and shone and reflected! when he had placed it on a huge marble piece and he easily and quickly arranged on it a heavy stone, which her father moved from place to place—very slowly and only gradually. The youth did not pay the very least attention to her—he was evidently worried and pulled down by some outside event. Deep sighs from time to time came out of his breast, and in the end Poullkheria remarked that a tear fell unto the edge of the marble slab. It now really seemed as though he as well as Martin had wandered off into some unknown world and had forgotten everything earthly. Martin painted without interruption for seven hours; and in a like manner, without taking any rest, worked the sweet newcomer. Glancing at their indefatigable application, Poullkheria became frightened and feared that her posing might never come to an end, and so began to weep most bitterly. The features of her face suddenly assumed another look and thus her father began to be thoughtful and remember all that had taken place.

"Enough, my poor darling child!" he said with delicacy, and addressed the youth. Immense spots of paint and butter were now to be seen on various parts of his costly attire, his hair was indeed in the greatest disorder and his face red from exhaustion. Martin really did not know how he should thank and reward him.

"Tell me at least thy name, thou good youth!" he said, turning to the boy.

"Mirdat."

"Why—is it possible?"

"Be silent!" interrupted the youth and went out, but Martin looked after him with inexpressible astonishment. Only in this moment did he recognize in him the Tsarevitch-successor, the great and famous victories of whom the whole East was talking. Yesterday only he had returned from a victorious expedition to Rome, and they were convinced that he would soon start out again. How was it possible that during these very few days of rest he wished to take upon himself such a tiresome and dry work? Afterwards he thoroughly inspected what he had achieved and was perfectly overcome by the number and variety of colors and shades arranged and used by him.

"If he accomplishes his new war as rapidly as the first, I shall have enough colors left up to the time of his return," reflected Martin, and gayly and joyfully went home with his dear little daughter, who all along the route questioned him about Mirdat. Having dined in haste and slept a little, Martin once more continued his labors and was steadily busy until sunset.

Thus the undertaking went on day after day with the difference only that Mirdat no more appeared. It seems that he had left for Movakanne and soon after had pacified it for his father. It is not useless to relate what happened to Mirdat upon his first expedition.

The provinces of Ranna, Movakanne and Aderbadaganne since the most remote times belonged to Georgia, and only during the reign of Tsar Mirdat the Fourth,

grandfather of our hero, they came under the control of the Persians. Satrappe Barzabode administrated them. Having taken Ranna, the Tsarevitch-successor Mirdat wished to call out Barzabode in a duel. Barzabode took up his quarters in an abandoned tower beyond the city, but Mirdat surrounded it from evening on—supposing that during the night it would be impossible for him to slip out and escape, and so he resolved to give rest to his exhausted and wornout warriors till morning. In the night he made an inspection tour of his brave camp, and passing quite close to the tower on the grassy slopes, he overheard a sweet conversation. He stood still and paid close attention. The sweet voice, hardly hearable, pronounced the word: "Batono!" ("Sir.")

He raised his head and almost fainted from extreme astonishment and delight: on the roof there stood a girl of indescribable beauty. The moon was shining on her and gave her long, regular features some secret mysteriousness and unusual charm. And suddenly her coral mouth opened, and from it poured out a low, inspiring and enchanting speech. She implored the young military commander to save her from the clutches of her very old father.

"Who and what can dare to oppose itself to thee? Thou dost conquer towns and provinces. Thy powerful army defeats and submits even hero princes. Whomsoever or whatsoever thou mayest look at in this world, thou canst always consider it thine own, for it doth not come within thy reach only when thou dost not wish it so. Thou hast wonderful beauty, common sense, mind, strength, and bravery, while I never had anything except a dear father. He prided himself in his warlike glory—thou didst darken it! He had won for himself the entire confidence of the Shah, thou didst destroy it. He boasted about the invincibility of his warriors, while thou didst conquer and baffle them. Thou above all didst have my way of looking at things and my imagination. Thy all powerful type did victoriously enter my soul and doth

drive out from it the poor, terribly degraded character of my old father!"

And at these solemn words the beauty fell down on her knees. "O do not tear him away from me!" she murmured, reproachingly, stretching out her arms towards him.

"There will be no duel!" unexpectedly said Mirdat; he turned around and quickly went to his tent. This young lady was the daughter of Barzabode, Sagdoukta. From that moment onwards Mirdat loved her with all the mightiness and emotion of his hero-prince's heart, and there was deep, deep grief and depression in his soul. Was it possible to suppose that the Tsar would permit him to marry the daughter of that satrame, to whose care certain provinces had been intrusted and who of late had been deprived of the right of administrating them?

Having reflected a little he made up his mind to leave a comparatively small number of warriors in the places which he had but just successfully conquered, while with the remaining soldiers he returned to his father in order to ask for fresh instructions. Everywhere they met and received the young conqueror with great ceremony and delight; radiant faces were surrounding him, the joyful cries of the people filled his ears, while in his heart it was all dark and heavy. With unbelievable effort he finally forced himself to answer the general and most hearty greetings constantly showered on him with a caressing smile, and on the following day, when he safely reached his beloved home, he immediately went to continue and work for the glorification of the most Holy Virgin, invoking her assistance and protection. The same was his object when he reached his native town after his second great victorious campaign in Movakanne. But this time Martin, who had already succeeded in finishing the expression of the face of the Heavenly Queen and having spent some time in reproducing her garment, now took the matter more easily, and indeed, frequently watched and glanced at his busy assistant. Having noticed the

running tears of his daughter, he let Poullkheria go home, and turning to him, asked him what might be the cause of his great sorrow.

"Thou hast helped me so much," said Martin, "that I should really like to render thee some good service, good youth; perhaps my old age makes me fit and enables me to give thee some highly useful counsel."

"Thy grey hair testifies that already long, long ago the time went by when thou wert excited and moved by those thoughts and plans which called forth my tears. Nobody except the most Holy Virgin is strong enough to make my terrible grief go by, viz., because I love with all my heart a splendid girl to whom the sovereign will never give me his consent to be married."

Saying these words Mirdat went, with a painful expression on his face, but Martin understood this most simple clear explanation quite differently, and through this mistake he let his most honest and loyal soul almost perish. This soul was perfectly clean, enlightened, free of sin, and shining like the most costly diamond.

And so once upon a time, during a dream, some heavenly angels cut out the soul and brought it to the Lord. "O, Vladyka!" they said, "look thou at this brilliant diamond—this is the soul of the Greek man Martin, who hath given up his whole life to the glorification of Thy name. There is not one vice which can possibly obtain admission to or seek refuge in it, for it doth entirely belong to Thee! Looking at it and admiring it, we are frequently thinking that upon the death of Martin this diamond will be fully worthy of ornamenting Thy holy throne."

The sweet, sweet angel voices quieted down, while from the depths of the earth the devilish laughing and ridiculing were heard. "Why dost thou so rejoice—miserable Satan?" asked the guarding angel by order of the Eternal God.

"Very soon this diamond will be spoiled, darkened, and I shall become the happy possessor of it!" replied the devil. Thereupon the good angels began to bitterly

cry, but the Lord comforted them. He gave commands that the soul should again be placed and fixed in the body of the sleeping painter, and also informed the angels that in case Martin should ever happen to listen to and obey the sly devilish instructions and thus have his soul darkened, that they should find means to bring it back to God, although it be by the heavy, nay distressing, road of worldly grief and tears.

And quickly the angels descended into the church of Stephen Tsminda (that is of Saint Stephen) and put the blinding diamond back into the slumbering Martin, but after them Satan came up and began to persuade the Greek that his daughter had completely won the heart of the Tsarevitch and that he himself would become a royal father-in-law. And thus at last vanity stained the diamond with dark and dirty spots, its shining lightness began to go out more and more, while the perfectly extraordinary and marvellous beauty seemed to be covering itself with a dark skin, and Martin daily continued to give himself up to worthless vain thoughts. And see, the diamond was decaying and would soon lose all of its unusual qualities. In the meantime Mirdat conquered and pacified Aderbadaganne.

"What dost thou wish me to give you as a reward for thy highly valuable services?" asked the delighted, enthusiastic Artchill. Mirdat reverently fell down on one knee and kissing the lower end of the royal garment, asked for permission to be married to the daughter of the conquered satrappe. The loving father replied with an amused smile: "As long as thou didst administrate Ranna, Movakanne, and Aderbadaganne, Sagdoukta seemed to have hold of thy heart, and it seems to me that the very best way for thee to get out of this dangerous position is to claim the honor of obtaining her hand!"

Immediately an embassy was dispatched to Barzabodus, who received it with indescribable joy and delight. Sagdoukta, supplied with a most gorgeous trousseau and dowry, was conducted to Mtzkhet where the mar-

riage ceremony was performed and the innumerable fêtes connected with it continued for many days. The Tsar gave his son the city of Samshrilde with the province surrounding it. Besides through her beauty, Sagdoukta distinguished herself still more by her very remarkable mind and, which was in those times rare, a general education.

Mirdat sent for the very wisest and most learned men of his age, living in Samshvillede and intrusted them with translating into Georgian the holy New Testament, and thoroughly explaining it to the Tsarevna Sagdoukta, who already fully believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and having gone through and accepted the holy baptism, intended to have a cathedral of Zion erected at Samshvillede. For the planning of the inner walls a most precise and talented artist was necessary.

Mirdat just then remembered his old friend Martin, and sent some attendants to look for him. But when their point of destination was reached, he was no longer among the living. He had succeeded in finishing his work in the church of Stephen-Tsminda at the time of the last campaign of the Tsarevitch in Aderbadaganne, received a right royal reward from Artchill, but instead of returning to Greece as would have seemed natural, he remained at Mtzkhet, hoping to bring them to a favorable issue.

He daily went to the merchants of gorgeous weavings, chose the most precious objects, and composed of them a most valuable and rich costume for his Poullkheria.

The very most talented and experienced tailors under his personal direction were employed in ornamenting with and sewing on these garments precious stones of one exquisite color, and besides that jewels. Trying first one thing, then another on his beloved Poullkheria, for whole hours at a time he watched and interested himself in her superhuman beauty, and with full confidence displayed before her the pictures of her future greatness. On hearing all these compliments and glorious prophecies

the shining eyes of Poullkheria lit up with still greater joyfulness. Her clean heart could not understand or appreciate the many foolishly vain thoughts and intentions of her father. She loved Mirdat, indeed, not because he just happened to be the son of a King, but on account of his bravery, goodness and perfect honesty. That was why, notwithstanding exceedingly powerful temptations, the soul of Poullkheria remained as neat, without a sin and immaculate as when she had not had such notions; but Martin's soul daily lost its splendor and became covered all over with dark, dark spots.

In the end Mtzkhet was bursting with joy, for a report spread from one quarter to another that Aderbadaganne had been successfully taken by storm. Triumphant receptions were now universally prepared for the great victor, and young and old rushed into the street with colored flags or flower branches in their hands. Poullkheria in her newest attire, and by her very side Martin, stood on the steps of the church of Stephen-Tsminda (*i.e.*, of Saint Stephen).

When the powerful procession came up to them, the Tsarevitch got off his horse and went into the empty temple. Martin, unnoticed, followed on after him and clearly beheld how he went straight to the finished image of the most Holy Virgin and having fallen on his knees was fervently praying. When, however, the prayer being over, the Tsarevitch rose, Martin ran up to him and quickly whispered in his ear:

"This great day the Tsar, my master, will not refuse thee anything."

But the Tsarevitch, persuaded that he alone was in the church, was evidently and most visibly struck and moved by this unexpected witness of his all hearty and sincere prayer. He did not recognize Martin, did not remember even his words, but hastened with all his might to go out of the church, while Martin thought that his own affairs were taking an unusually pleasant turn and greatly rejoiced. A few days went by, on the large square of

the city a glashatai (kind of herald) made his appearance with a number of trumpeters, and having called together the people, they formally announced to them the coming marriage of the Tsarevitch-successor Mirdat to Sagdoukta, the daughter of the Persian satrappe (probably district governor) Barzabode.

A slight noise was heard, and a moment thereafter a cry which was sharp enough to tear one's soul to pieces and which attracted general attention. On the ground lay Poullkheria, not showing any signs of life. A thin, pale colored rivulet of young boiling blood was slowly coming out of her mouth. Kneeling before her was Martin, who, indeed, was giving himself every possible trouble to stop the abundant flow of blood. Somebody out of the crowd was desirous of running to help her, but he looked back with a really terrified glance, and like a regular madman, having seized her in his vigorous arms, rushed off with her to Stephen Tsminda. Here he placed her at the foot of that wonderful picture for the execution of which she had served as a model and completely lost his senses. And, nay!—he actually saw how the cupola moved and opened itself, and how two angels gradually approached Poullkheria. In their hands there was just as grand a kind of a white transparent, indescribably magnificent garment as the one which dazzled their eyes.

Instantly they took off the costly robe and clothed her in the attire which they had brought along. Poullkheria came back to life and looked around with the greatest astonishment as the rays of the sun, one after another, reflected upon the opening of the cupola, and approaching slowly, the angels came down, who quickly and intelligently drew out two wings from them, quite as beaming with light as their own, and made them grow on to Poullkheria, and having manœuvred with them several times, the new angel without the least trouble raised herself from the earth and joyfully did the angels of the Almighty God sing a marvellously, nay extraordinarily,

sweet greeting song to their dear new companion in arms, inviting her to fly off with them to the Throne of God.

The new angel departed from the house of worship with a last, tender parting glance and having beheld her father, she began to implore the angels to also take him with them into the World of Life Eternal. The angelic song now stopped, their faces were darkened with sorrow, and painfully they announced that willingly they would have prepared for him at first a more desirable spot in the all glorious and all wonderful domains of Heaven, but that he threw away his splendid chance by wicked and useless vanity. The tears ran down in floods from the eyes of the former Poullkheria, and these tears of hers, as clean and fresh as the morning dew, dropped down unto the face of him who had died and brought him again to life and this time to a happier one.

Martin jumped up, being fully aware of and perfectly ready to acknowledge his sinfulness. Abundant tears of remorse came out of his eyes and two more angels appeared on earth.

They gathered these tears and washed out with them the wicked, sinful soul of Martin and the dark, dark spots of vanity on this most precious of diamonds grew quite white. When, however, the diamond again acquired its former harmless and utterly immaculate look, they radiantly bore him up to the throne of God, where he is shining and enlightens with a marvellous talent and adroitness those artists who are working for the glory of God, but Poullkheria guards their shining, clean souls from any sinful or irreligious infection.

VI. Happiness Is Within Us

A LEGEND

In the fifth century (458 A. D.) the Ossians stole and led off the sister of the Georgian Tsar Vachtang the First, known under the name of Gourgasslan (the lion wolf). The then three-year-old princess was called Mikrandoukta. When, however, Vachtang had conquered and pacified the Ossians, killed their commander-in-chief, Great Bagkatar, and seven of his brothers, and brought the sister safely home, he also took with him as a captive the very youngest of the Bagkatorian brothers, Mirian, whom he had left alive upon the repeated prayers of Mikrandoukta. The boy, who had been a playmate of the Tsarevna, was appointed page and grew up at the royal court.

As he grew older his attachment for Mikrandoukta constantly increased, but he never so much as ventured to reveal to her his thoughts and feelings, neither by his speech, nor his looks, but used to go to an out of the way spot of the royal garden and there began to bitterly cry. Gradually, however, as he became a man, his wooings took a more refined form and were frequently put down in exquisite verses. A large number of little pieces of poetry are in circulation among the people under the name of "Wooing of the Knight," for when he reached his fourteenth year, the Tsar made him his body-knight. His comrades were of course jealous of this exceptional distinction and heartily congratulated him, but he, deeply grieved by the final departure of the princess, went into his favorite resting place; there a song came out of his lips, which for whole ages was known and went down from generation unto generation.

THE SONG OF THE BODY-KNIGHT

(Literal Translation)

" Why did they lead me into the high royal palace,
To thee as thy page,
Thy most winning eyes
Did fill my soul with burning fire.

" Although I descend from a powerful Vladyka
And am now at least the Tsar's favorite knight,
Nevertheless I cannot even testify my love to thee
Nor exchange words with thee through sweet, sweet glances.

" It is as though a mighty fortress was separating us
So fearfully high and immobile,
And my humble glance does not dare to penetrate
E'en to the grand old royal window.

" In love, however, I am thy slave, O dear princess,
I am quite able to pick up a quarrel with the king,
For I do pride myself in having just as fiery a soul,
Nay, just as great a heart.

" Both of us are still in life's early stages
And the same blood runs in our veins,
And if I cannot boast of such great royal fame
I may at least be proud of my strength and powerful determination."

And, as though wishing to give his powerful strength a fair trial, the youth struck out with his fist against the stone and lo! the rock began to shake and split. When he looked at his fist he noticed that there was blood on it, and thereupon Mirian was more downcast and depressed than ever before.

"What possible use can my hero prince's strength be to me when my heart is harder than stone?" he exclaimed, and again tears flowed down his face.

And so from the mixture of tears with dripping hero-blood, a little spring formed itself, which flows at the edge of a precipice—then again it makes its way through high, high stone blocks, like a wild animal and, having success-

fully overcome them, it cries and hops about like a child. Mikrandoukta did not at all share the intense attachment of Mirian and took no notice of it. Attaining her growth she married the Shah of Persia. On the day of her departure Mirian came to his little spring, fixed the sword between two stones and threw himself against it with such violence that the sharp blade went right through him. His youthful body slipped into the water, but the burning blood swelled the little rivulet and gave it a marvellous power of resistance. To this well known spot from that time onward, all true lovers streamed in, and if anybody has a really good chance over the turbulent, fairy-like stream, he will take to writing excellent verses and his love will be crowned with the most complete success; if, however, he expects and awaits inspiration, he must certainly give up all hope forever and his passion will, alas! slow down and come to nothing.

The first man who experienced these strange feelings and went through the whole thing was the negro Nebrotk. He fell deeply in love with his mistress, and even went so far as to venture to open his secret to her. The incensed and very frightened mistress immediately ordered that he should be drowned. They threw the unhappy "darky" in the stream of tears of the stremiannoy (body-knight) and went off; he at first lost consciousness, but later came back to his senses and came out on the opposite bank, completely cured of his useless passion. As he still felt uneasy and could not think of daring to return to his mistress, he built a little log house for himself on the bank of that ghastly precipiece near which flowed the rivulet, and not knowing what to do with himself he wrote down the whole history of his life, then investigated the source and course of the remarkable stream and registered that too.

Having thoroughly established himself in this most interesting region, he began to look after all those who happened to approach these important domains of fate, invited the travellers and pilgrims to his house, asked each

one the story of his or her life and diligently and carefully recorded them. Soon a whole bouquet of most varied and entertaining tales was gotten up, reminding one of the all famous Arabian stories, and I can only regret that my memory prevented me from remembering but very few of them. I can understand very well all that Nebrotk relates about himself. Once upon a time, in the night he was awakened by some sweet, sweet singing, and having hastened to rise and go out, he smelt a strong and remarkable fragrance. He turned and peeped right into the precipice.

The moon was lighting up its bottom; the enormous rocks glistened like pure silver and gold, while the water shone like the finest diamonds. With great satisfaction —nay, delight—he glanced at this heavenly picture, and suddenly his eyes were fixed on and could easily distinguish two human heads on the surface of the water. He began to pay more attention; a very handsome youth—a negro—and quite as beautiful and splendid a white girl were standing in the water up to their throats, and having lifted their arms high out of the water, they were playing with some wonderful, bright, gleaming threads. Correctly these nets were fastened and refreshed with clean, clear water, and they seemed to stay in the air without any sign of motion.

Later he distinguished the following details: These nets of threads were fastened to an immense leaf of some sea plant and in this massive, fairy-like floor, which was all aglow with emeralds and gold, there stood a figure exceeding all human beauty. The whole scene was wrapped in a slight watery fog and a soft moonlight. The longer Nebrotk paid attention and looked at the surprising spectacle the more easily he succeeded in making out that all the charm of this extraordinary scene was concentrated in the form of a perfectly magnificent woman. In her hands there was some kind of a long feather, consisting entirely of sun rays, with which in the course of her sweet swim she reached and touched the different

plants and flowers, and indeed, as though subjected to her peremptory commands, they gave out an indescribable fragrance and each little flower united with the marvellous choir which had gently awakened Nebrotk and sang softly, sweetly, beautifully.

Nebrotk got perfectly passionate, so anxious was he to understand the contents and exact meaning of this fragrant, flowery little song, and holding his breath, he began to take the greatest pains and was enabled to hear: "Astkchicka! O Astkchicka! O Astkchicka! O Astkchicka!"

That struck him as most peculiar, and having once more fixed his eyes on the head of the woman, he beheld a glistening, darling little star. This was exactly Astkchicka, *i.e.,* Venera, whom the Tsar Vachtang the First had chased out of all his temples and houses of worship, and her adorers as well as her sacrificers and those who had been so benefited by her—all without exception had to abandon her in the deepest grief and disappointment. Then, however, she found two tender lovers. He was an adventurer, viz., a fisherman, but she the daughter of a very wealthy gardener. The goddess promised them her complete protection, and they without further reflections threw away their only property, i.e., their garments, and naked they went into the water in order to construct something for their kind benefactor. And see! the expelled goddess decided to rise and establish herself near the interesting "rivulet of the tears of the body-knight" (stremiannoy), and to that spot she directed her numerous admirers.

Having seen Nebrotk, Astkchicka waved with her all shining feather, and from the motions she made, a bridge really and truly formed itself. She came down to earth, and having turned around to look, she again waved with her feather. On one side there was a bush of yellow roses, on the other side one of white roses. Their buds were instantly transformed and actually turned out as garments for her loving servants who were hastening

after her. Thereupon she slowly returned to the hut of humble Nebrotk and with a new motion of her bewitching feather changed it into a perfectly marvellous, brilliant, nay, most elegant royal palace. Nebrotk stood like one struck by lightning. With a clever but sly smile upon her beautiful face, Astkchicka ordered her servants to lead him off to the stream and put him down on the estrade abandoned by her. But hardly had these orders been complied with and fulfilled when the pillars of the estrade gave way and broke down together with the negro. The terrible, yes frightful, cry of the drowning man perfectly silenced the sweet chorus of the flowers. The servants were frightened and anxiously looked at the water, and after a short time a half god came out of it; he was white with a golden crown imperial, in which only the fiery black eyes reminded one of the drowned negro.

All four settled down in the fairy-like palace and were blessed with indescribable happiness. This was indeed a kingdom of love, unhindered and unrestrained by any laws. Nebrotk perfectly adored Astkchicka, and the fisherman Naboukodonozor the gardener woman Roussoudanna. The host was quite in love with the goddess and the servant with the gardenkeeper, although both were merely common negro slaves. But even in the fairy like palace under the protection of the very goddess of love, there happened to be a spot especially designed for animated secret conversations between lovers. In one of these unhappy moments the conditions and peculiar qualities of the stream became known to Naboukodonozor, and the fear that the magic force of the water should influence Roussoudanna found a refuge in his soul, It is of course well known to all of you that suspicion is the enemy of love. Naboukodonozor seriously began to think that Roussoudanna had fallen in love with him. Seeking the reason of this imaginary adoration he suddenly came upon the idea that she was occupied in involuntarily comparing his black skin with the most godly

white complexion of Nebrotk, and in consequence of this horrid supposition his heart began to be filled with emotion and passion, while after passion came ungratefulness to Astkchicka and a very revolutionary spirit; afterwards she transformed Nebrotk, who had really done absolutely nothing for her, into a half god, while the latter, who had successfully brought her to this enchanting resort, she simply abandoned and left a negro and slave.

And during the night he walked along the bank of the stream and sang a song of his great grief, and suddenly the old cedars, the high, high peach trees, the grand old nut trees composed a beautiful chorus and an all powerful song, blowing everything before it like a huge wave, reached the palace and suddenly awakened the goddess—but Nebrotk quietly went on sleeping and heard nothing. Stepping lightly, Astkchicka softly and cautiously went out to the rivulet, where Naboukodonozor, with his back turned towards her, was bitterly crying, and blushing terribly, she knocked him over and sent him flying into the water.

Without a word or motion did Naboukodonozor enter the water, and just so he came out—more magnificent even than Nebrotk, and throwing himself at the lovely feet of the goddess he covered them with kisses. Astkchicka did not at all object to such proceedings, but did not let him get out of sight, and it seemed very evident that she also was in love with him. The slave, encouraged by the concessions of his mistress, seized the godly hands and began to kiss them just so madly. Suddenly, however, Astkchicka roughly pulled them away, passed them around his neck and having given him a kiss on his lips, she instantly disappeared. Some wonderful extraordinary fire ran over the whole body of poor Naboukodonozor from this rare, but dangerous kiss. A new feeling got hold of him, viz., a boundless desire inspired him to run off to the goddess, but the very thought that she was able to treat, nay, caress, Nebrotk in the same affectionate way, completely kept him from making a fool of

himself. He threw himself on the ground and tried with all his might and main to extinguish the burning fire which was raging inside of him, rolling in the soft sweet grass and mercilessly treading down the highly fragrant flowers, while the moon seemed to be offended with its greatest favorite and bashfully hid itself behind a massive cloud. The perfect and impenetrable darkness at last forced the crank to come back to his senses; he then went home exasperated, most dissatisfied, and wicked in his intentions.

Roussoudanna was quietly sleeping and knew of nothing that had taken place in the night, and what must have been her astonishment, when in the morning she beheld Naboukodonozor with a pure white complexion and golden hair. Upon the question what had occurred to him, he passionately replied that he had just gone to a stream, let himself down into the water and had come out in the very state she saw him.

"Pay attention and be careful to remain faithful to me," she jokingly said, and went out to gather fruit for the "déjeuner" of the goddess. After a while Nebrotk also woke up and asked Naboukodonozor the same question.

"I followed in thy steps and see! the result has proved to be the same," was his short answer. Nebrotk looked at him rather suspiciously, and unwilling to believe the truth of the story, he went to the goddess to inquire about the affair and to see how matters were getting on in general.

"I came to a decided conclusion that it was most unkind and unjust not to do for my real savior what I had deigned to do for thee," was the godly reply, which made Nebrotk very uneasy and filled his heart with renewed passion.

Roussoudanna wept and wept, Naboukodonozor got terribly provoked, Nebrotk was deeply impressed and full of emotion, while Astkchicka vainly exhausted all her eloquence in trying to explain that her palace was a refuge

for independent love, not subjected to any laws whatsoever. General dissatisfaction, suspicion, grief, and tears were alternately seen and heard in the fairy-like palace. Poor, poor Roussoudanna could not dry her eyes. Once upon a time, going to look for fruit, she went out of her way and got completely lost. The sun was already quite red when she sat down to take a rest after such a hard, steep walk. Her dark, undecided intentions and thoughts concerned again Naboukodonozor and the magic conditions and qualities of the rushing stream, and her grieved feelings turned against the goddess.

"Why under the sun do they call thee the benefactor of men?" she passionately exclaimed. "Thou didst win and encourage us with the promise of thy protection as long as thou didst need us, but now that the situation has changed thou tookest my lover Naboukodonozor away from me and thus why should we help thee to escape and lighten the king's terrible wrath?

"In all probability his God is far stronger than thou, when thou runnest away from him.

"O Christian God, save me!" rang out from the grieved soul of Roussoudanna.

"O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy upon us!" Such was the exclamation of an old man's voice, and indeed unhappy Roussoudanna soon beheld an old man approaching her and making his way among the trees and bushes.

"What is the matter with thee, my dear child?" he kindly asked, coming up to her. Roussoudanna naturally said that she had lost her way, that she was very much exhausted and did not know how to continue her route.

Thereupon the old man led her to his home. He lived somewhere in the immediate neighborhood, not at all far off, in the grotto of a high, high rock where he nourished himself with the milk of wild goats and with dates. With the greatest pleasure he placed before her his whole stock of provisions, brought her a pitcher of water, care-

fully arranged the sofa of leaves and inviting her to take a good rest, he went out. Having refreshed herself, Roussoudanna began to watch him most attentively through the gate of the grotto and there she saw that he had walked a little way off and then had fallen on his knees and begun to pray. She witnessed how his good, kindly face suddenly lit up with some marvellous, perfectly heavenly, happy, and joyful expression, and she ardently desired to find out from the poor, but grand old man, what this sudden, really indescribable joy meant in the course of his long, laborious, honorable life.

At last the old man finished his fervent prayer and began to gather dates; having got together a huge pile, he gayly carried them into the grotto. The guest met him at the entrance.

"I thought that perhaps you would not have enough to eat with just those dates which you found in my poor dwelling house," said the kind-hearted host, turning to her, "and see here, I am bringing thee some more still," and he put down the deliciously sweet fruits right before her.

Roussoudanna, perfectly astounded by such unusual and unheard of goodness and thoughtfulness, thanked the old man with tears in her eyes.

"What does thy painful grief consist in?" he asked—and continued thus: "It is possible that the needs of life have been weighing down on thee?"

"Oh no, wise, dear old man, I have never known what it is to be in need."

"Well then, did not some severe illness pull thee down and mercilessly deprive thee of thy strength?"

"I am in perfect health and have a strong constitution."

"Perhaps some dreadful worries did not give thee rest."

A (*the woman*). B (*the hermit*).

A: "I really have nothing to be worried about."

B: "Then did not regularly and faithfully carried out duties exhaust thee?"

A: "No, dear hermit, for I was living in a fairy-land

palace from which the following torments were entirely excluded: need, worry, work, and illness."

B: "Worldly attractions and habits may have led thee off the good track and restrained thy liberty?"

A: "We were by no means subjected to any such rules, nor even to etiquette."

B: "It is possible that the laws of your palace were extremely severe and therefore made you feel very depressed?"

A: "But really, we acknowledged no laws."

B: "Well then, perhaps the wealthy proprietor of the palace abused his might and compelled you to do certain disagreeable things which were unjustifiable?"

A: "Not in the least, for Astkchicka was sole mistress and administrator of the palace."

B: "There now remains but one supposition, viz., that she united such people as would naturally perfectly hate one another?"

A: "Why, not at all, we all gathered around her in the mighty name of love."

B: "Ah, aha, I understand the matter," the old man unexpectedly broke out, "you came together over there in the name of love and it is most strikingly evident that there is some defect about your love."

A: "Thou art wrong, old man," energetically rang out of Roussoudanna's mouth as she suddenly interrupted him. "I can bear witness and prove that nobody ever and so strongly loved his dear ones as I loved my excellent darling Naboukodonozor!"

The grave hermit glanced at her quite differently—yes, suspiciously. "My child," was his brief reply, "that which the idol worshippers falsely call love, is by no means that holy feeling which we understand under that term. Their love is one of those innumerable examples of self-worship and vanity."

Roussoudanna's face was all red from blushing, while her eyes were filled with tears.

"Oh no, that cannot be so," she exclaimed with a

trembling voice, "with the greatest joy would I suffer any possible privations, every imaginable torture, in order to give him pleasure and satisfy his desires."

The hermit sighed deeply. "Is it possible then," he said with a doubtful, inquiring tone, "if thou dost indeed truly love thy fellow men and women, that nobody in this wide world is either capable or strong enough to put an end to thy unhappiness? Relate to me now what the real source of thy misfortune came from and in what manner it was able to assume such tremendous dimensions."

"Naboukodonozor, whom I love more than anybody or anything in the world, got to loving another woman!"

"Well, what of it?" quietly asked the old man, "is this the only cause of thy great sorrow? How can one call it unhappiness if this made his fortune and rendered him contented?"

"Some would have thought that she might like such a course of events instead of regretting it."

"What is the matter with thee, O wise hermit?" She was perfectly overwhelmed with joy!

"Now, my dear woman, rely ye simply on me, for I will undertake to explain it all right to thee, as for me, it was a source of sorrow and doubt."

"O thou remarkable man, dost thou really not understand that for me this circumstance was worse than all the tortures of poison?"

"But thou only just a short time ago didst assure me that the very height of happiness for thee was to stand every privation, nay, all sufferings, simply in order to give him pleasure and act in accordance with his wishes and aims."

Thereupon the hermit again opened his mouth and sang songs of praise and thankfulness unto God, the Almighty Master of Heaven and earth; and see! his happiness was founded on love, but on love to a being, a being which was perfect. He always submitted his love to the righteous laws of God; this was not a senseless in-

spiration, but an action free of any earthly, foolish bonds, of elevated and religious aims and seeking nothing but rest and comfort for the moment—going always by the road of honesty, truth and veneration of all that is upright and good!

His love was trying to perfect itself, approach if possible that greatest example of utmost perfection which was shown to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Happiness is a sweet, sweet little flower," said he, "which is quite unable to grow among unrighteousness, unfairness and wilfulness—only by the lawful way of Christian love to God, veneration and love to his neighbors, can he strive to live properly and give those magnificent fragrant flowers, for which you are all constantly looking and which you are as yet unable to find. Following out the orders of my God it will be easy to find happiness, for His perfect and most merciful laws restrain the will of the individual man only there, where it proves necessary for his thrift and condition in general. Thou, it is true, didst live in a fairy-land palace, from which all illnesses, needs, worries, and labors had been excluded. You did not fear nor obey any legal authorities, nor laws, nor customs. It was love that firmly united you all. Well, tell me then, were you indeed happy and successful?"

"Oh! no, not at all!" answered Roussoudanna. And once more the old man tenderly addressed her and convinced Roussoudanna, baptized her, and taking a staff, at the top of which a cross was reproduced, he went off with her to the fairy-land palace. Reaching the rivulet they beheld Nebrotk gathering the necessary fruit. With despair and terror did he inform them that Astkchicka now considered Naboukodonozor her husband, while he was forced to serve his rival and nobody paid any attention to—yes, had utterly forgotten the existence of Roussoudanna. Then she asked him to sit down and told the inhabitant of the castle all that had happened to her, and in her young voice the speech about perfect endless and

eternal love sounded still more convincing. Love is eternal when it is well planned and arranged, it is endless if free of sin and perfect if subjected to the almighty laws of the eternal God, Father of Heaven and earth.

All were deeply impressed, and now the hermit continued the speech and told them about the all-powerful strength of God, before whose serene appearance all false, worthless gods take to flight, and about His extreme wisdom and knowledge, rapidity of decision, mercifulness and righteousness, and see! Nebrotk immediately wished to be converted and baptized. At the end of his powerful and persuasive discourse, the old man simply touched the fairy-land palace with his staff and in a few seconds it completely disappeared like an apparition. Then he instructed Nebrotk and Roussoudanna in real Christian love and in the obligations of married life and then performed for both the wedding ceremony, and having fervently prayed to the Creator they all together went to work erecting a perfectly new log house for the young married couple, in which the happy mortals passed many blissful years, writing down the stories and tales of the various travellers. Some of them I shall perhaps tell you of another time. To my sorrow my memory did not preserve that artistic, yes, clever way of relating, which this little collection of legends more and more clearly explains to one—bringing us over and over again to the great truth.

"Happiness is within us." The imperfection of Nebrotk and Roussoudanna came at first from the imperfection of their mutual love, which loves itself as much as the beloved. Then, however, gradually as they were taught to love their neighbor more than themselves, yes to love him so much as not to offend each other and not grumble and growl over little defects and mishaps which regarded their personalities alone and from which the neighbors should not suffer, did they teach themselves and conceive how well it was to rejoice over the blissfulness of others, to think only about others, to wish to seek pleasure and

happiness only for others and to put all their energy and delight in the contentment and comfort of others; this great happiness finally made its beneficent way into their souls and admitting everything they said.

"Happiness is within us—" and then they needed no more fairy-land castle, from which all cares, illnesses, needs, and labors were banished. They found time and also strength to live an actual and true life among all its turmoils and difficulties, to know how to guarantee one's shining happiness, and then they heard not the fairy-land song of the flowers, the fragrant song of the youngsters saved by them for a joyful, diligent, and Christian life, and they rejoiced in the song of thankful young people, who by their example of love, had been saved from many a sorrow and suffering. These young people had thoroughly learned how to live a happy life and this chorus did not stop as long as they lived on earth.

VII. The Tribute of Roses

A LEGEND

In our most blessed and favored country, where the sun shines so brightly, where the flowers have such a sweet, sweet fragrance, where the birds sing so melodiously, long ago in bygone times, when neither I nor my father nor my forefathers had been born, there lived a young and splendid couple in the Aule of Mokde [Note of the Translator: Aule is the common term for a very small village or rather mountain hamlet in the Caucasus.] They were always most hospitable and everybody praised them, but the Lord, who always delights in seeing the religious and the poor well treated, fully rewarded them and abundantly furnished them with rich presents, thus clearly showing them his appreciation for their good deeds. They had everything that could be desired: youth, beauty, good health, riches, and reputation, they

sincerely loved one another and their inner happiness was as great as their outer appearance and great success. Their children were healthy, clever, good and lovely to look at. Their elder son, little Timitch, distinguished himself especially through his strength and ability; he was endowed with most fiery eyes, once sparkling like flashes of lightning, then again as soft and innocent as the eyes of a young mountain goat.

For nine years the happy husband and wife lived thus, when suddenly between the aules of Mokde and Khamki a very bloody strife ensued and led to much destruction of life and property. During this strife, when the father of Timitch was mercilessly killed as well as his brothers and sisters, while the mother was taken prisoner and led off as a captive, Timitch himself was saved by some inexplicable wonder and soon became the favorite and greatest pride of the whole aule. In the meantime his mother, who was still a beautiful and youthful woman [in our country the women can be married at the early age of twelve] was sold and taken away to Turkey, where her wonderful appearance was the chief ornament of the Sultan's harem. In this select collection of beautiful and highly attractive women, her good looks and sweet disposition cast a dark shadow over all the rest—just as our bright sun dims all other planets.

The Sultan got perfectly wild with delight over her, and he incessantly showered most precious weavings, gorgeous carpets and splendid stones of one color and priceless shawls—in a word everything that the rich, rich East could produce lay at her graceful feet. Nevertheless in the midst of all these flatteries and endless temptations she always remained faithful to her husband. It needed a marvellous mind and character like hers, while utterly refusing to fulfil the wishes of the Sultan, to still remain the governess of his heart and the immediate object of his kind and thoughtful attention. In these proceedings a lucky circumstance firmly assisted her—viz., the fact that she had been preparing herself to become

a mother already four months before, when she happened to be taken prisoner. The loving and enchanted Sultan decided to patiently await the birth of the baby, which was foreign to him, and then marry his unusual captive, who was of royal blood and thus fully had the right to be an empress. The nearer she approached the time when a child should be born, the gayer the future Sultana became, so that those surrounding her really imagined that she had forgotten her husband. But oh, how terribly mistaken they were! Indeed, the eventful day came and a daughter Tousholi was born.

When they brought her the baby she long looked at it and tears came in floods out of her magnificent eyes, afterwards she made the sign of the cross on it and gave orders that it should be carried off.

"Call Samson to me," she said. Samson was the eunuch, given and attached to her personal service by the Sultan and who had faithfully done his duty by her side. She knew how to win his esteem and confidence, especially as he was himself a Christian (of course quite secretly). When he arrived she ordered him to take up the opakalo (probably a kind of Eastern fan) and protect her, while sleeping, from uncomfortable and noisy flies; but she did not want to sleep—this was simply a sly device to make everybody leave her apartment and get out. She profited by this occasion to tell Samson the following facts:

"Samson, to thee I trust the new-born daughter Tousholi, promise me if possible secretly to make a Christian of her, as sincere and earnest in her belief as thou thyself. Among all these unbelievers thou wert not a slave to me, but a true and faithful friend and a tender and thoughtful brother. By the almighty mercifulness of God I am destined to live not much longer, for I hope to-day already to be able to unite myself with my dear husband, while thee I ask to take the place of this dear orphan's parents. Thou knowest my whole history, my strength does not enable me to speak to thee as freely as I should like. For the sake of the outward appearance I shall leave Tousholi

nominally to the care of the Sultan, and I am convinced that at first everything will go right with you. When, however, your situation changes, I hope indeed that you may find means to return to Mokde and look up my first-born child, whose natural obligation it is to be the powerful protector of his defenceless sister and her very aged educator, but now give me my little kindjall (Caucasian dagger)—fear nothing, I shall not cut myself open, for I have not even the strength to do that."

Samson placed in her now feeble hands the handsomely ornamented little kindjall, artistically decorated with precious stones and fastened to a most gorgeous girdle. This was the wedding present of her husband and she never left it out of her sight. The submissive old man, through his tears beheld how the face of the sick woman suddenly lit up and how, her eyes flashing with some extraordinary fire, she bravely pulled the little kindjall out of the sheath and put its thin blade, which was as sharp as the tongue of a snake, up to her lovely mouth.

"She sincerely kisses it," thought Samson, and quieted himself; but the precious little kindjall had yet another resemblance with the tongue of a snake, of which the faithful servant knew nothing. It was indeed poisoned!

Having heroically swallowed the deadly poison, the sick woman commanded Samson to instantly inform the Sultan that she desired to see him. The all-powerful adorer of this Christian heroine immediately made his appearance and was utterly distressed when he saw the signs of approaching death already marked on her magnificent features. In his anger against those standing about, he threatened them with perfectly atrocious punishment if they did not that moment find doctors able to bring his favorite back to life. In the meantime with a weak but expressive and comprehensible movement of her hand, the patient showed that she desired to be left alone with him. All the rest disappeared in a second and she broke out thus:

"My minutes are counted, I am dying, not paying you

back in any way for your innumerable marks of kindness to me, and nevertheless I wish to ask yet another favor of you: be a father to my new-born daughter! It is my firm and irrevocable wish that my true and ever-faithful Samson shall stay by her and bring her up in none but my own dear religion; when, however, you are tired of her, simply send them to Mokde to my son Timitch, and even if he be no longer living, I am fully convinced that the excellent daughter of my loving husband will always find protectors and friends among the good and kindly inhabitants of Mokde." With these serene words she breathed her last breath. The tremendous fury and utter despair of the Sultan went beyond any description. The court body-doctor and the arifa (*i.e.,* the lady who administrates the harem) were hung without delay, but Samson and his sweet little pupil were given very fine and expensive apartments with magnificent board.

Every ten days the old man was obliged to bring little Tousholi to the Sultan, who having tenderly caressed her and given riches to the faithful servant, let them retire, giving the strictest orders that those who surrounded them should never hinder, trouble, or disturb them in any way. Thus three long years easily went by. The childish features of the face of Tousholi now acquired a most striking resemblance with the marvellously beautiful features of her late mother. The courtiers began to notice repeatedly that the Sultan after a time had fallen in love with her, was earnestly reflecting about something and frequently sighing. Thus the visits, which used to last but a few minutes, now became very long indeed, while little Tousholi, with her childish caresses, gained the affection of the Sultan more and more. Immediately two parties sprang up: the first, wishing to make Tousholi their excellent instrument in order to get the upper hand and overrule the Sultan, and thus naturally, constantly and unceasingly chanting her praises and flattering her to the skies; the second, which had resolved to make her perish and from this reason never letting one

occasion go by without trying to snap at her and pull her down from her exalted position.

During the fearful struggle of these two desperate parties, Tousholi's childhood went by and she was already a grown-up maiden, when the kind-hearted Sultan died. His successor by chance belonged to the dangerous and inimical party, and so the sharp and careful Samson began to energetically demand to be allowed to go away to Mokde. The permission to start for the home journey was given with great joy and satisfaction, and very soon they had already arrived at Mokde. Here there was no difficulty in finding out Timitch. He was known by young and old alike. The old servant silently took from Tousholi's baggage that precious girdle with the kindjall, which he had handed to her mother just a few hours before her untimely death and passed it to Timitch, drawing his attention to a splendid all-sparkling round tablet. On it were inscribed the dear names of his glorious parents.

"This is the remarkable girdle which was always around the waist of my all-beloved mother!" cried out the youth.

"Well, say now I prythee where is she staying? How can I possibly reward thee—oh, thou grand old man? Art thou sent by her?"

"I verily came to this memorable village by her sacred will," reverently answered Samson. "While dying she ordered me to lead thy sister to thee and hand her over to thy mighty care and protection."

"What, my sister? Well, well, is it possible that not all sisters and brothers perished together with their splendid father?"

Saying this he closely looked at the young girl and was evidently struck and impressed by her perfectly unusual beauty.

"The resemblance with your mother ought to be sufficient to convince you of the truth of my words."

Afterwards innumerable questions and answers were

mutually exchanged. The old man and Tousholi settled down in the house of Timitch and Samson heartily rejoiced, seeing soon how the youngsters became friends. But nevertheless there was nothing to rejoice about! The twenty-year-old Timitch, fiery, not given to reflections, unaccustomed to restrain himself in any way, was entertaining such intentions as would make Samson's hair stand on end if he thoroughly understood their meaning. What is there strange in the fact that the twelve-year-old Tousholi was unable to guess at the thoughts of her brother and firmly trusted him in everything with all her simple childish sincerity of soul. The passionate attraction of Timitch grew not with days, but with hours, and once during a promenade, without being at all disturbed by the presence of grave old Samson, he actually went as far as to tell her of his peculiar intentions.

Samson, astonished and disapproving the plan, threw himself in between the young people and was stupefied when seeing a dagger pointed towards him, but the terrified Tousholi speedily hid herself near a precipice. Seeing the immediate danger, the dying faithful Samson cursed the wicked and lawless boy, and lo! suddenly a great wonder took place.

Timitch was transformed into a wind and began to crazily blow and whistle over the precipice, but the submissive and ever loyal servant was turned into a gigantic rose bush, in the midst of which a rose of unusual size was growing and constantly blooming. By the will of God, angels with marvellous, all-glorious singing slowly let themselves down into the precipice, majestically lifted out from it the magnificent body of Tousholi and carefully placed it in the very centre of the superb rose, the all-fragrant leaves of which gradually closed up and thus buried inside of them the deceased. Attracted by the all-glorious angelic singing, the faithful inhabitants of Mokde ran together in crowds to the rose and many of them clearly saw how the angels gracefully interred Tousholi in the rose. But Timitch could by no means quiet down; with

anger and greatest passion he threw himself upon the rose bush and wished to break it down, but the more he shook the lovely branches, the closer and firmer did they stick to the rose and the better did they defend her from his unjustified attacks and depredations. When, however, he finally succeeded in carrying off the tender, tender leaves of the rose, Tousholi was no more to be seen, for her body had completely evaporated in the marvellous fragrance.

The religious inhabitants of Mokde enclosed the beloved holy rose with a very massive stone wall, called this spot Tousholi, and yearly when the first beautiful rose came out they celebrated a fête, which has quite a character of its own and is popularly known as "the tribute of roses."

The ceremony consists of the following points: Every young girl gathers a tremendous full bunch of rose leaves and standing one behind the other, they await the exit of the very oldest man in the village. He comes out, dressed in a white suit and bearing in his hand a white flag, the point of which is richly decorated with roses and covered with sweet little bells, while at the end a large wax candle burns. Putting himself at the head of the procession, the old man gives a solemn signal and the procession duly and martially directs itself towards Tousholi; behind it at a considerable distance followed young people, leading sheep and bringing along with them the customary offerings, *i.e.,* horns, balls, hatchets, silks, etc. The procession winds around Tousholi three times with beautiful singing in which is described in detail all that we have mentioned above—then the girls in their turn enter through the great fence and put down in a certain place their splendid fragrant offerings, softly adding:

"Saint Tousholi, help and assist me! Holy Samson, shield and protect me from the cursed Timitch and all of that kind!"

On the top of a pretty mound, formed by the magnificent rose leaves, the old man solemnly fixes his standard,

saying: "Saint Tousholi, make me wise, Holy Samson, help me to guard and defend all these tender maids from the cursed and all-hated Timitch and all those who follow his wicked example!"

After this earnest speech the old man sits down at the foot of the graceful flag, while at his own feet the young girls settle down. Then the young people enter the enclosure and kneeling on one knee pronounce a most reverential greeting discourse to the hermit and the maidens and then they turn about and face an opposite corner, where they curse Timitch who hath wickedly cast a dark shadow over their beloved aule; afterwards they cut up the sheep and gayly feast with all those present. When I was but a very small boy I happened to be in this place and was favored with seeing with my own eyes one or two roses inside the enclosure, which it appears is existing even in our advanced and enlightened days. These roses are really unusually large in size, but nevertheless neither a grown-up girl nor even a new-born youngster can possibly find place inside the flower. I understand that at that time they used to say with regret, that the fête of "the tribute of roses" did not repeat itself yearly! Thus little by little ancient customs disappear and antique amusements are superseded by new ones, which are not always successfully chosen; only grim Timitch never changes, for he is quite as restless now as ever before, here moves and weeps like a child, there makes a row, yes rebels like a robber and lawlessly destroys whole buildings. His dislike for roses never ceases, and as soon as he sees a sweet little flower he immediately begins to blow around it with impatience and anger until he hath scattered the beautifully fragrant leaves far and wide over the country. Now the story of Tousholi is already forgotten, but her name, among the Chechenzes, is given to all such interesting places, where they go to make sacrifices and fervently pray.

VIII. The Lot of the Holy Virgin

A TRADITION

When, by the special wish of the Lord, the apostles drew lots to decide who was to go out into foreign lands and preach the gospel of Christ, the enlightenment of Georgia fell to the share of the Holy Virgin. The Lord appearing to her exclaimed: "My mother, taking into account thy desires, I have come to the conclusion that this nation is more worthy than all others to have a place in the list of heavenly joys and blessings. Send thou then into this fine country, which hath fallen to thy lot, Andrew the First and hand him thy picture, which, from being placed against thee, represents thine holy face!" Then the Most Holy Mother of God announced to the apostle: "My dear pupil Andrew, I am very much grieved by the fact that the faith of the name of my son is not being preached nor advanced in the country, whose enlightenment hath fallen to my lot. When, however, I desired to start out for the journey my son and my God appeared to me and ordered that I should send to my separate province with thee my image and His, so that I should be the real cause of the conversion of these people and be their everlasting and ever tender helper and protector." "Most holy one, yes, let at all times the will of thy Godly son and thine be carried out and fulfilled to the satisfaction of all the world." Then the most Holy Virgin washed her face and having pressed it well against a platter, she left on it her reproduction with her predicted son in her arms. Having handed the image to Saint Andrew, she said: "Yes, may the mercifulness and the overwhelming help of Him who was born of me be with thee everywhere where thou choosest to go. I myself will invisibly help to increase the complete success of thy preaching tour and my province of future enlightenment will always remain

under my constant, nay, never ceasing care and protection." The holy apostle, having thereupon fallen at the feet of the most Holy Virgin, thanked her with tears in his eyes and joy in his heart, went to preach the faith at Trebizond, taking along with him Simon the Canonite. But here they did not remain long and continued their journey to Edjis. Seeing the perfect craziness of those stupid inhabitants, who were more like entirely senseless animals, the apostle directed himself towards Georgia, and arriving in Great Adtchara, began his holy work; for even here the inhabitants did not profess the faith of the only true and real God and committed deeds which were so shameful that it is unsuitable even to refer to them in any imaginable way. They showered many indignant insults upon the apostle, who simply and most patiently bore them all with the help of God and by being occupied in constant prayer before the image of the most Holy Virgin—and lo! the Lord fulfilled the ardent desire of his heart and brought the inhabitants upon the righteous way, but on the spot where the reproduction of the mother of our God was standing, there appeared an abundant and truly splendid fountain flowing to this day, and in which the saintly apostle baptized the inhabitants, who had gathered there from all the surrounding towns and villages.

He blessed and ordained the deacons and priests, explained to them in detail the holy principles of the faith as well as the church laws and successfully constructed there a church in honor of the Holy Virgin Mary. When, however, he wished to leave, the adoring people stopped him with the following remarkable words: "If thou art actually going away, leave us at least the image of the Mother of our God as a place of refuge and protection in case of trouble and need." Then the Saint ordered made a platter of just the same size as the image and put them together.

Immediately the reproduction was transferred to the new slab without any injury to the former image. Im-

mediately afterwards, the apostle handed the newly made image to the inhabitants, who, having received it with joy, placed it with great honors in their fine church, where it hath remained to the present day. Then they said good-bye to the splendid apostle, thanking him for his many good deeds, kissing him with true love and affection, and with him they sent one of the newly converted by the name of Matata. Going through the valley of Kkeniss-Tskall he led Saint Andrew up to the summit of a mountain, on which the Saint formally erected a cross in honor of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and that was the reason why this exceptionally favored mountain began to be universally called "Rouiss-Djouar," which means, "the iron cross."

After that they went down into the valley of Odzrche and soon reached the frontiers of Samtske, where they took up their headquarters in the village of Mount Zaden. Seeing that the inhabitants over there bowed down to and wickedly worshipped idols, they sincerely prayed to the image, which had triumphantly accompanied them everywhere and instantly all idols fell and were broken to pieces. Then they continued their route to Astbour, which was formerly called Tchoukall-tchett (the river of lilies) in Armenian and really lies just opposite Sakrisse, and arranging themselves, they settled down to rest near an idolatrous temple, nowadays Dzvel-Eklesia. At that time this country was administrated by a widow by the name of Samsgrari, which means "frontier," who had but one son and he too had just died among the depressed and mourning subjects of his mother. That same night from the guarding fortress a powerful light was seen over that spot where the image of the Mother of our God was placed, and at sunrise people were immediately sent to find out who was there and what their business was. Returning to the city, the envoys announced to Samsgvari, that it was the light from the reproduction of some wonderful Virgin, whom two foreigners had evidently brought with them; that they knelt and prayed before

this strange image and that they preached the faith of a new God, who could make the dead rise.

The widow immediately sent for the saints and questioned Andrew: "Who are thou, whence didst thou come and what in the world is the new faith about which thou speakest so much, for verily I say unto you, up to this time nothing approaching it in the very least has ever been heard of?"

"I arrived from Jerusalem," energetically answered the apostle, "and am the servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, who doth make the dead rise again. I preach about Him as about God and the King of all kings. Know ye then that He who believeth in Him and lets himself be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost will receive all he asketh for with true faith and will be healed of every illness." Upon hearing these sounding words, Samsgvari fell at his feet with tears in her eyes and cried out:

"Oh, have thou pity for my widowhood and terrible unhappiness and with the strength of thy God bring back my only son to life. I will duly carry out and fulfill to general satisfaction everything that thou commandest me to do, without uttering the slightest objection, only in order that I may behold again my dear son alive, for he is the only descendant of our great family, for I have really no other children."

"Well, if thou believest in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only true God, He will certainly give thee all that thou dost ask of Him with faith. Then the widow with tears of joy said to the Saint: "O servant of the only real and true God, I do sincerely believe in Jesus Christ, of whom thou preachest and whose holy name thou announcest to the world at large. I, however, beg thee to increase my strength of belief in Him, the Saviour of the world." Having heard these sincere words with pleasure, the apostle chased away the musicians and the curious, leaving only Samsgvari and her relations, and taking the image of the most Holy Virgin, he placed it on the

corpse of the little child and falling on the ground he began to pray, the tears abundantly streaming down the fine features of his fervent face, and with many sighs he stretched out his arms towards the image and then rose, took the little boy by the hand, and truly! the boy seemed to awake as though from sweet slumber, and Saint Andrew handed him over to his mother.

All those present were silent—so struck were they with surprise, while the widow, seeing her beloved son restored to life, was filled with utmost joy, jumped up and threw herself at the feet of the Saint, gratefully thanking him and covering his knees with tears. She, with all her heart, believed in the Lord Jesus and was baptized with her son and all his household. Afterwards she sent out her servants to all the Samtsetskian mtavares with official letters, containing the following passages:

"I, Samsgvari, the widow of your kristav, do joyfully announce to you, my brethren, a most happy event for all nations, for there arrived from a strange land, a man who preacheth the faith of a new God, the reproduction of whom made my blessed son arise from the dead; hasten ye therefore, so that we may choose the only true and sincere faith and decide whom it becomes us to obey and adore." Having heard of this wonder, the Meskhians rushed in from every spot of the monarchy in such numberless crowds that they actually filled the whole valley of Sakriss, and they all stared with perfect astonishment at the risen son of Samsgvari. But the sacrificers of Artemis and Apollo, the temple of which was situated in that part of the country, firmly resolved to oppose themselves to the Saint and cried out:

"Artemis and Apollo are great gods," and after them many of the people shouted the same, while others nevertheless exclaimed: "We must all necessarily submit before such an unusual wonder!" Rebelling and quarrelling in every way began to make itself felt. In the end it was decided to open the gates of the temple, to solemnly place the holy image between the idols, to set

up proclamations on both sides of the gates, place guardians and pass the night in religious prayers. "Pray all you want to your false gods," said the faithful followers of Him whose religion conquereth all others, "we, however, will pray to our only real and true God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and at sunrise we shall see: if your gods get the upper hand and are victorious, we will follow your example. If, however, they are defeated by our God, then let all present give praises unto Him the Only one."

Having carried out everything according to the agreement, at very sunrise they opened the doors of the temple and beheld the idols, fallen and broken to pieces in the dust, while the image of the Mother of our God was surrounded with glitter and light like the sun. Then they understood the importance of the new religion and the whole nation unanimously exclaimed: "Great is the God of Christians, preached about by the holy apostle Andrew," but the sacrificers begged the Saint to forgive them their sin of unbelief, and all having assured him of their repentance, were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost and loudly sang praises unto God, who had safely saved them from the deadly grasp of the merciless devil.

Then Saint Andrew made up his mind to go into other wild countries and preach the principles of the New Testament, but the widow and the nation implored him not to go away from them until he had successfully taught them all the laws of the faith. Every single day the nation gathered in tremendous crowds and the apostle carefully explained to them the rules and details of the religion and all the necessary church rules, consecrated for their service a bishop, many priests and deacons and again started for his great and dangerous mission. Samsgvari and the nation renewed their ardent entreaties, but the Saint tenderly replied to them:

"My dear children, do not lead me into temptation, for my duty calls me and prescribes to me to render also other

cities and villages happy." "Well, if thou must absolutely abandon us," they mournfully answered, "so leave us at least the image of the most Holy Virgin to strengthen our never-ceasing confidence in the new faith and as a means of mutual protection." This image," said Saint Andrew, "formed itself from simply being touched by the body of the Mother of our God," and he went on explaining to them how by the extreme condescension of the Lord the apostles drew lots to find out where each one should go to preach and that Samtsketia fell to the share of the Virgin Mary. He joyfully related how instead of herself she had sent her portrait into the provinces belonging to her sphere of enlightenment as a means of confirmation and protection to the true believers and promised that she would always be with them in spirit and soul now, henceforth and evermore. Messkhi and Samsgvari, having found out that they were under the spiritual regency of the Heavenly Tsaritsa, were filled with indescribable joy, but the desire to be able to possess her image made them still more radiant.

With tears of emotion in their eyes they solemnly placed it in a small church, which had been speedily constructed and consecrated in the name of the Holy Atskourian Virgin. Nowadays they usually call this church "Dzvelle-Ekletsia," that is "ancient church," as the present edifice is built of stones which had served to construct the first church and stands on exactly the same spot. Then Saint Andrew went to preach the Holy Gospel in Nigalia, Djavakhetia, Artakanna and Kola, where he remained very long, enlightening the depraved unbelievers. From there he directed himself to Klardjetta, then to the land of Parthia, Armenia, and for the fête of Easter safely arrived at Jerusalem.

When, however, Tsar Aderke discovered that the Kartlians and Messkhians had finally abandoned the faith of their forefathers, he sent several kristaves to them, who by force officially obliged many to return to a régime of darkness and falseness. Nevertheless some

true and faithful followers succeeded in concealing images and crosses and loudly praised God that the apostle was no longer in their presence. The Tsar, however, grew very angry against the kristave of Klardjette for his not having held up the Saint, who, passing Easter Day together with the remaining apostles, again bravely started on a large preaching tour in Georgia. Crossing the lands lying near Fao as the Choroke, he thoroughly inspected the villages, preaching everywhere and to everyone the Holy Gospel of Christ, and soon reached Svanetia.

Here at that time a woman reigned, who accepted the apostle's saintly blessing with false and pretended good feelings. Matata with the remaining pupils stayed in these domains, but Saint Andrew and Saint Simon went farther to Ossetia, where they got to the town of Posstaphore and from there they soon successfully arrived at the Bosphorus, where with the almighty and conquering help of God they were favored with the gift of being able to accomplish many wonders, and converted to the only real and true faith and baptized tremendous numbers of people. Afterwards they went back to Abkhazetia and farther to the city of Sebasst, the present Tikkoum, where many more unbelievers were also converted to the religion of Christ. Here Saint Andrew left Simon the Canaanite with several good pupils and continued his route to Djivetta, peopled by a wild vile nation, filled to overflowing with disgraceful sinfulness, love of cruelty and without any religious feeling whatever. They actually did not want to listen to him and unanimously made up their minds to kill him, but lo! the Lord protected his faithful servant, ordering him to instantly depart from the wretched creatures. But this nation remained in unbelief to this day. The tomb of Simon the Canaanite is in Nikopsia, between Abkhezethe and Djikerk, on the frontier of Greece. Having confirmed the Abkhazians and Megroes in the new faith, Saint Andrew left entirely for Skythia. Soon afterwards Tsar Aderke died and the kingdom of Georgia was divided among his two sons Bartomme and Kartamme.

During their rigid administration in the year 70 A. D., a rumor began to gain ground that the inhabitants, who were under the supreme authority of Rome, absolutely refused to submit themselves to the Emperor Vespasian and energetically rebelled. The Emperor ordered his son Fitt to persuade the Jews to quiet down, but they did not cease to make a fearful row and locked themselves up with their army in Jerusalem. Then the Romans surrounded this town and began to mercilessly besiege it. The besieged were suffering from terrible hunger and diseases and the nation from despair began a terrific civil war. In a short time there perished such a quantity of Hebrews, that they threw one hundred thousand corpses out of the town; besides that the streets and houses were filled to overflowing with dead people. In the end the Romans made their way to Jerusalem, ruined it completely and destroyed the temple, so that according to the holy words of the Saviour, not one stone remained on top of another.

Ever since then the Jews have overrun every part of the world and no longer have any own fatherland. Many of them arrived at Mtzkhet and settled down with their compatriots, among whom were also the sons of Varrava, delivered by the Hebrews instead of Jesus Christ, when they were invited to let one of their prisoners free. During the reign of the grandsons of Bartome and Kartaume the kings Azork and Armazeli, the latter found out about the existence in his monarchy of the miloti of the prophet Ilia and instantly gave orders to look for it among the Jews, but the Lord did not allow this extreme treasure to fall into the hands of the ruthless pagans, his searchings finally turned out to be vain attempts and to all questions the Hebrews simply answered that it was concealed in the earth near a magnificent cedar, which had grown over the tomb of Sidonia. Consequently Saint Nina more than once commanded Abiatkar to question his father where it indeed was situated, but the old man every time gave one and the same answer:

"The spot, where is hidden this holy garment, about which in its time the true believers will sing praises unto God, is like the place on which Jacob beheld the staircase leading up to Heaven."

This was the only occasion when they seriously disturbed the Hebrews, all the remaining time, however, before and afterwards, they constantly received and treated them exactly according to the rules of true Eastern hospitality and made them feel quite at home in their new fatherland. In the year one hundred and eighty-six A.D., Revv ascended the Georgian throne. The word "reva" signifies "conqueror," but the nation gave this serene sovereign a designation still more suited to him and still more honorable, for they rightly named him "the just sovereign," for his very first great public act was the repression of privateering and robbing in the army and the prohibition to bring children to be offered to the gods.

Although Revv the Just was himself an idolator, yet he did have some kind of a vague idea of the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, highly esteemed His true followers and even strictly forbade to chase the Christians, who had held their own in small numbers among the worthy descendants of the most enlightened apostles. These little marks of attention were sufficient to support Christianity, which stood high in the eyes of many men in the country. From this bright moment onwards the number of Christians began undoubtedly to increase, although of course slowly, but every year so that by the arrival of Saint Nina they were already forming a considerable and by no means to be despised class.

IX. The Comet

A LEGEND

On a steep, steep mountain path, leading directly to the monastery of John of Zadenne, a young girl was slowly walking. Her lovely sweet hands were all covered with blood as she was holding on with all her might and main to the prickly bushes; it being absolutely necessary to stick to them, so as not to fall into a deep abyss. Having safely reached a little square she stopped in order to quiet down and catch her breath; for in front of her another just as difficult ascent was awaiting her and she felt that it was her duty to rest and save her remaining strength. Having stood a while, she cautiously sat down and began to look at the path by which she had dared to come. Far in the distance one could see a horseman. The well trained horse like a cat hung on to the mountain, taking advantage of the most insignificant little trail or plateau and of every imaginable hardly noticeable highland road. Small stones rolled away from under its feet, the dry old branches of many a bush trembled and broke with a sharp cracking sound while the horse galloped—approaching always nearer and nearer the terribly exhausted woman-traveller.

Coming up with her, the rider reverently bowed. He also intended to let his faithful horse have a good rest on the little plateau and naturally he began a conversation with the sitting maid. From what she told him, he found out that she was called Salougvari and that she undertook this pilgrimage, wishing to pray at the sacred tomb of a most holy, saintly hermit for the restoration of her dying mother's health. The young people went on talking for some time and the gallant rider offered her to continue her journey, holding on to the tail of his horse. This means of mountaineering is considered by us in

Georgia the very safest and far less exhausting than all others. When they reached the summit he rode into a deep thicket, growing on the edge of the mountain, on which stood a monastery; the horseman's way of treating her changed completely and his extraordinary speeches terrified Salougvari. She, having abandoned the tail of the horse, in an instant ran off to the monastery and like a frightened little bird made her way into the church.

The glances of all those praying turned with astonishment to the runaway wanderer and this unusual surprise grew still greater, when after her a horseman bounced in on a foaming steed and with his hat on his head and not paying the slightest attention to the solemn church service simply began to search with his piercing looks for poor, poor Salougvari, who had taken refuge at the very tomb of the famous saint. Having beheld his fellow-sojourner, he rashly knocked against his horse and with one bold bound, he arrived close by her side.

In that memorable moment, the ground suddenly shook and actually opened itself, swallowed up the fiery and insulting horseman and again majestically closed itself up with such marvellous rapidity that those present were struck as though by lightning and could not utter a word.

It is of course well known that somewhat below the monastery in the very mountain the temple of Zadenne was cut out, which soon became the permanent residence of demons, and indeed these latter rogues, daily coming out of their horrid dwelling places, very much disturbed Saint John and his numerous scholars until he gave orders that the entrance into the vast abandoned cave-region should be firmly barred and closely blocked up. Our bold horseman had the most peculiar—yes wonderful feeling in the neighborhood of this whole temple or house of worship. Upon a height there stood the gigantic reproduction of a handsome old man sitting on a massive throne, between his feet lay a ring-formed snake—the true symbol of eternity—while in his hand he held lightning. This was all artistically cut out in marble. The

elegant crown, which decorated the wise brow of the old man, had still preserved some signs of pure gold; here and there precious stones were shining. This was decidedly the kingdom of coldness and of some secret magic-like half-darkness. The light was able to shine in only through the opening holes of the mountain and through the holes yet left between the perfectly immense stones with which the entrance was surely and safely barred.

Having thoroughly recovered after his strange incident and quite unexpected fall, Aderke (it was thus they called the horseman) began to carefully inspect and search the cave. His attention was especially drawn by one spot, shining like a diamond. It appeared that this was a tremendous piece of mountain salt, on which a ray of light which had managed to get through one of the mountain holes was gayly playing. Other such pieces were falling down in long, long divisions from the cupola-like, vaulted ceiling. Thirst was torturing Aderke. Thinking that this was simply ice, he began to direct all his efforts towards successfully breaking off a respectable piece, but notwithstanding his most desperate jumps, he could not accomplish anything. Then he naturally imagined that from the sides of the cave much lower down he might be able to get something and began to go around it in a circle, trying to find here or there some possible opening, on which he might firmly stand and make his way. Passing close by a great piece of salt, he overheard some very distant voice which was singing a soft, marvellous song. Aderke began to listen most attentively.

"Powerful sire," called out the extraordinary secret voice, "I have been awaiting thee for many years, dispel thou as quickly as possible this darkness and lead me forth into the region of freedom. Oh! have pity upon me!—I implore to be given freedom only with the exalted aim of submitting to thee, to serve and wait upon thee, to love thee tenderly, yes, to be thine ever obedient slave. Thou didst happen to come hither, pursuing a most handsome mortal being; look now at my features;

you can plainly distinguish them through my dark prison. The more the extreme brilliancy of my subterranean dwelling darkens her dreadfully poor saklia (hut) the more the glitter of my beauty darkens her exceptional charms. She did not even venture to look at thee, for she feared thy caresses. I, however, did not take my eyes off from thee from the time that thou didst fall to the feet of mighty Zadenne, I constantly admire thee with a perfectly passionate glance, I love thee, I call thee to my side: come, oh come thou quicker!"

Wild with excitement and deeply impressed by that most passionate song, Aderke entirely forgot his unhappiness, forgot also the thirst which was torturing him, he began to stare more closely at the salt masses and through their transparent grim old walls he began to be able to distinguish the tender outlines of a young and pretty woman. He knocked with his vigorous fist against the cold, cold mineral wall, but the powerful blow did not leave the slightest trace; then he pulled out his kindjall and thrust out his arm still stronger against the salt shapes, which were almost turning to stone. It slightly trembled; Aderke now turned to the pedestal of the idol, detached from it a large piece of fine marble and using it instead of a vigorous hammer, began to diligently knock it as hard as possible against the long handle of the kindjall. The opening evidently made considerable progress.

In the meantime, through the little opening which had been made in the pedestal, there slipped out a lizard, after it a snake, then a flying mouse and finally a little devil. Coming out of their wonderful ambuscade, they were all of exceedingly small proportions, but these proportions grew larger and larger every minute. The lizard seemed to possess a perfectly formless human face, the snake had wings grown on to its body, the mouse seemed to have the head of an owl with a tremendous beak and fiery sparkling eyes. The little devil, far smaller in size than the rest, cleverly jumped at the mass of marble which

was nearest to Aderke and by a well known signal ordered them to begin the furious attack. First the lizard moved and trumpeted with some kind of an awful, not human voice.

"Let thou go my prisoner, insolent adventurer, or else we shall jointly cut thee up in pieces!"

Aderke, astonished by such reasoning, turned around. The unusually enormous lizard stood on its hind legs and seemed to be all prepared to attack and swallow him up. The flying mouse made a noise and waved with her big wings, howling out some terrific metallic sound; the snake stretched out and slipped up to him with perfectly awful hissing, while the beastly little devil joked and insulted him above his head and filled the air with unbearable, bad odors. Aderke, seeing what was coming, bravely pulled out the sword and daringly struck at the snake, who was just making ready to spring at and wind itself around his feet.

The excellent sword cut it right through, but unfortunately without doing it the very least harm. It quickly set to gathering together its fearful rings and went back to the idol. Aderke energetically rushed after it and fainted from terror. From the pedestal sprang out one after another innumerable and varied poisonous monsters, one more terrific—yes, fearful, than the next. Then there were also people with snakes' heads and snakes with birds' wings and birds with fishes' tails and fishes with heads of living people. All these awful monsters hastened to abandon their ambuscade, crowded and pushed each other, slipped over each other, quarrelled in a most undignified manner, bit each other, struck and scolded each other; here one monster was hissing, there a second one was making a violent speech, a third one let out from his mouth such a horribly disturbing whistle that the cold ran over one's whole body. In the midst of this tremendous row a human cry of distress reached Aderke; he turned around. The lizard was doing his best to widen out the opening which he had forced through, while the

snake with an evil meaning and aggressive hissing hastened to occupy each newly opened little crack. Aderke wanted to run and help the poor, poor woman-prisoner, but the flying mouse threw itself towards the entrance and having spread out its wings guarded with its own body its outrageous comrades. In the meantime the remaining monsters seized Aderke by the legs and would not allow him to budge a step from the place where he stood. Thereupon he bravely drew out his pistol and with a sharp and rare shot smashed to pieces the salt block. At this moment the monsters unanimously took hold of him and he of course lost consciousness, so that he did not see how out of the blazing brilliant niche formed by his pistol shot, a splendid young woman rushed forth to meet him.

Before her the monsters reverently stepped aside. "Away with you!" she cried out in a most commanding voice. "Take him up cautiously and carry him after me," pointing to Aderke, she ordered some strange bear with birds' legs and with a crane's beak to carry out her commands. The monster instantly submitted to the explicit instructions and, continuing to respectfully follow her imperious commands, he went in with his burden, up the steps of the pedestal to the very idol and placed Aderke at its feet. "Now," said the young woman, "your power over me has ended, having got back all my former freedom, I have also regained all my past influence and power. Tram, tram—tara, all to your respective places!" she continued in a most decisive tone, and the horrible monsters one after another rushed back to the high pedestal. When they had taken up their proper positions, she bent down and raised the piece of marble thrown away by Aderke and cleverly—yes, powerfully, barred the entrance. After that she again went up to the idol, fell down on her knees and said: "Great Zaden! Here you have a gift fully worthy of you as a grateful reward for my happy deliverance. If it pleases your serene majesty that I should not go away from this,

thine abandoned temple, trying with all my energy to be equal to the task of replacing your former most numerous servants, so for my sake give me back this dead man, call him back to life, start up in his heart a sincere attachment to me and we shall both be your constant, loyal and ever watchful servants. The heavy stone eyelids of the idol opened themselves, its eyes sparkled, and from this momentary sparkling Aderke instantly came back to life and was able to stand on his feet. At the same time the idol with a terrific crash and shaking fell to pieces and disappeared in the dust.

"Who art thou—magnificent creature?" was his first question.

"Let us go into my transparent dwelling place," she replied, "I shall place thee on my exquisite crystal sofa and quietly entertain thee with my interesting stories and dear caresses."

They jointly went into the niche. Through the sweet little opening a small, small ray of light streamed in and perfectly marvellously played upon a smooth, salty ceiling, showering down millions of beautiful sparks and blazing with all the colors of the rainbow. The beauty sat down, put Aderke's head on her lovely knees and while he was endeavoring to fall asleep, she told him her whole history.

"I am the daughter of the Moon and of Zaden, they call me Aipina. My father actually decided that I should appear to the glance of people only to prophesy some peaceful event, the rest of the time I am ordered to remain secretly hidden in the grim walls of his temple, which at that time was a place of general worship and sacrifice. The people used to crowd about here from morning till night with very rich offerings. Numerous sacrificers burnt their offerings, while their female companions in long white garments sitting on golden seats prophesied the future. But notwithstanding all this excitement it was stupid for me, and one fine night, when my mother had covered everything with her soft, magic, fairy-like

light, I wilfully managed to get out of the temple and flew into the sky, blazing with my highly brilliant tail. Mother became frightened by my daring to commit such an act and hastened to hide herself. Then Ialone began to gayly run up and down on the horizon, busily chasing the many stars and pushing them on with my tail. Among the heavenly lighters a most astounding and terrific plot came up and they hurried to get me out of the way as quickly as possible, and my father angrily informed me that my perfectly crazy undertaking had made him fail.

"It came to pass just so, for on that day a poor, poor monk arrived and settled on the mountain. Zaden of course ordered the monsters to instantly chase him out of the dwelling which he had chosen, but the hermit by some marvellous sign of his hand deprived them entirely of any strength. Many pilgrims, who had arrived from afar with offerings to pay their sincere respects to Zaden, upon seeing the newcomer on a height, peacefully sitting between wild snakes, naturally went up to him in a wide circle and spared no time or strength in order to satisfy his intense curiosity. He, however, took full advantage of this to make them give up the faith of their forefathers and instruct them in some religion, the chief peculiarity of which was hatred of our old, old gods.

"In the end the unceasing attacks of the monsters began to bore the monk: he therefore gathered all his hearers and together with them strongly barred the grand entrance of the temple and quietly left the place. Through inexperience I had at first wickedly laughed at his great efforts: what use was it when Zaden, at his own will guiding and directing thunder and lightning, used to smash their edifices to pieces in no time at all, while the old man in going away touched the hard stones with the same marvellous movement of the hand which had destroyed the power and strength of the monsters, and Zaden immediately felt that his godly qualities and peculiarities began to abandon him forever. As a punish-

ment for my most stupid volunteering, he deprived me of the shining form of a comet and transformed me into a woman, whom he commanded to guard the poisonous monsters. They hastened to fix me in this salt wall, but Zaden, who grew weaker every minute, in a last, but tremendous, outbreak of wrath worked out the following decision:

" 'Thou wilt be entirely in the power of these awful monsters until thou art able to find a mortal man who delivereth thee, and then they will again fully obey thee!' This was the last sign, not only of his power, but also of the life of my father; ever since then he turned himself into a breathless idol and sat immovably on his marble throne for several centuries. Through the holes of the fallen house of public worship the water flowed unto his most royal crown and meanly washed away from it the highly precious ornaments. Lizards climbed over his face, the flying mice quite fearlessly sat down on his powerful shoulders and hands, the snakes wound around his legs! He remained insensible to everything and not strong enough to protect and defend himself. I must say I had an awfully stupid, dull time. Days, months, years, even centuries went by and actually nobody appeared. I had already quite given up all hope when kind fate led thee hither. Now we must absolutely find means to get out of this place. I for my part know that from this temple there leads a subterranean passage to the numerous catacombs with which this mountain is overfilled and from them we can go wherever it pleases us."

"But who will show us this passage?" asked Aderke.

"I have a good friend among the monsters; it is the bear with the crane's nose. During all the long and dreary years of my unjust confinement he daily nourished me. With his long, long beak he managed to make a little opening in my dark dwelling, looked for and gathered the hives of wild bees, who had taken refuge in the holes around here, and fed me with their honey. He was at first a man of the same faith as our enemy the hermit

and chanced to be banished hither for having ridiculed some servant of his God."

At these words Aipina struck the palm of her hand; the bear took away a stone and climbed out; then she informed him of the object of the whole undertaking and he, having warned them that the way would be long and exceedingly tiresome, hastily entered their cave and attentively and vigorously began to try with his beak where the mass of salt was thinnest. When, however, such a place had been successfully found, he and Aderke pushed against it with their whole weight and after long and repeated attempts they pierced a rather small hole, through which it was very evident that they should have to go.

First the bear slipped through, after him Aipina and Aderke. The passage was cut out in the rocky part of the mountain and was so close and small that it was necessary to go one behind the other and to stoop over. Having advanced a little farther they joyfully came out on a small square with a much higher cupola-like ceiling. Through a little crack a dim ray of light was seen. They sat down to rest and having looked about somewhat they came to notice something gleaming, yes, burning like gold. This turned out to be a fine glass vessel with four pretty handles. It was of gold color with thin white patterns and filled to overflowing with ancient Greek silver coins.

"The first thing found is naturally due to thee," said Aipina in a very gracious tone. And the bear having taken up the vessel on his long thin beak again set forth on his journey. It was necessary to follow on by just so narrow and low a passage—only fully twice as long—as the first. It led them into a large round cave, which was exceedingly high. At the very top there was a rather large opening, through which the light could easily penetrate. At the side of one wall stood a wooden grave without a roof, and in front of it an old, old candlestick of red clay. To the tremendous surprise of our travellers, the whole room was illuminated by the fine blue flame of a very rare wick. They went nearer and saw

that in the tomb there lay a hermit, very likely a saint, because his body was splendidly preserved. "Let us take a rest," said the exhausted Aipina, sitting down on the floor. The bear slowly lowered his vessel to her feet, but Aderke did not let his eyes lose sight of the deceased, as though he was trying hard to remember some familiar features, and suddenly he succeeded in his mental researches and with awful screeching and jumping threw himself on the bare floor in front of the grave.

"Forgive me, oh, Holy God," he cried out, "forgive me that severe insult which I inflicted upon thee in my state of craziness and for which I have been so cruelly punished." And with most sincere and hearty repenting he prayed to God and the Saint to pardon his terrible sin. Aipina heard him with eyes and mouth wide open, but on her the words of Aderke produced quite a different impression. He understood how fearfully he had offended God and his proud heart was filled with perfect remorse.

He fell down on his knees by the side of the monster and wept bitterly and long over his wicked actions and earnestly implored to be pardoned. The all-merciful God accepted the tears of both great sinners and sent them a deliverance which was quite as marvellous as the punishment. An unusual light was shining into the cave and in a second blinded the praying men; when, however, they again began to be able to distinguish the different things, Aipina was no longer to be seen, but on the spot where she stood there shone a blindingly magnificent comet.

Aderke glanced at the bear—he had been transformed into a very handsome youth, in his hands, under the rays of the comet, burned and played with various colored fires the remarkable, ancient glass vessel. In an instant the comet began gradually to draw nearer to the opening in the vaulted ceiling. The gleaming windings of her long, long tail safely guided both the astonished persons and attracted them after her. Soon they had successfully com-

pleted the march through the long and narrow entrance road of the cave and began to rise higher and higher until they had triumphantly reached the summit of the mountain. Then the comet let herself down to the doors of that same temple, in which Aderke had so terribly misbehaved on his arrival in the said region. Aipina was again transformed into a simple woman and began to request Aderke that he should make her a slave and servant of the omnipotent God who had accomplished such great deeds of creation.

In the meantime the sunrise service was just beginning and the monks began to come out of their cells to celebrate their morning devotions. The first stroke of the bell was then heard. Aderke and his faithful companion took off their caps and reverently made the sign of the cross. In this minute to them came up the monk who usually stood at the tomb of the Saint, when poor Salougvari had taken speedy refuge near it. He found out Aderke and furiously looked at him. But the most humble and submissive speech of the really repenting man quickly quieted his anxious feelings. Aipina was converted and really and truly became the wife of Aderke, while his comrade in the hour of trial, who had made use of his fortune in order to buy up a very extensive vineyard near the poor saklia (hut) of Salougvari, happily married her and took over into his house her widowed mother. All three lived long and happily and very frequently visited Aderke and Aipina, who were by no means behind them in sincerity of love and perfect harmony.

X. The Jewel Necklace

It was the twenty-second of December, the day of our holy "Fate-decider" Anne. In a poor saklia (native hut) not far from the road leading into town there sat a very young, beautiful girl, surrounded by a number of

children. She was bitterly crying. On this day the father of this unhappy family died in jail; and that same terrible day, when he was taken away from his home and locked up against his will, the poor mother breathed her last breath. For what reason they had imprisoned him, the children did not know. They tenderly loved their father and in their true childish imagination it seemed to them as though he could not be wrong in any department of life whatever. The last time that they had seen him, he informed them that people would come and punish him even before the fête, and so they diligently prayed for his deliverance and salvation to the holy martyr Anastasia—and, behold! on the day of her celebration, she cut the cords and bands which prevented him from enjoying the blessings of home life and delivered him forever from prison as well as from the terrible punishment.

"Zenobi!" remarked one of the children, "I want to eat." "Sit ye all down," replied the young girl, rising and drying her mournful tears. She covered the table with a simple blue cloth with white flowers and placed on it a star-formed vessel, on which a whole mountain of rice was seen.

"Pray ye first and then eat to your hearts' content," she said.

"But thou, darling, wilt thou not join our company?" asked the older boy.

"I will eat afterwards; just now I have no time, but I will readily eat up all you leave!"

Zenobi forced herself to smile although tears were really choking her; this was all the food which remained in their house, they had no money whatever—how and with what were the children to be fed the next day? That was the question which constantly came into her mind and kept her from being quiet. Wishing to conceal her worry, she went out—but her brother took advantage of her absence in order to somewhat restrain the appetite of the children.

"Leave something for Zenobi," said he, "for I believe

she has eaten nothing since morning; all the bread which was left she divided among us without keeping a single piece for herself."

Noticing also that the quantity of rice was constantly diminishing, he assumed a more decided tone:

"Enough!" he suddenly broke out, rising from his chair. "Pray ye to God and go out to play in the street, the sun is shining in all its wonderful glory—lose no time while it is warm and comfortable!" and taking the smallest of the children by the hand, he read aloud the after-dinner prayer and went out.

"Zenobi!" he cried, coming out, "we have all finished." The young girl entered the room, hastily crossed herself and with anxiety sat down and began to eat the rice, but she had not succeeded in swallowing the first morsel, when the door of the saklia opened itself and a poor, poor hermit came in.

"In the name of the Infant Jesus let me get rested, refresh myself and have something to eat! said he. Zenobi immediately rose; hunger was torturing her, but she did not hesitate for a moment to offer him her forlorn repast.

"Yes, may God be blessed, who hath sent a guest even to our poor saklia for such a great celebration!" she answered; "eat—while I prepare thee a comfortable bed," and having done everything to make the foreign traveller feel as much at home as possible, she went out into the street, in order to keep the children quiet during the sleep of the wise old man.

After two hours he came out, sat down along by the saklia on a huge stone which took the place of a bench, and pleasantly called the children. His touching, caressing voice and his great good eyes instantly won him forever the sincere love of the dear children, they gayly ran up to him, while he pulled a small apple from his pocket and a Sitzevian handkerchief.

"If you bring me four quills from this fine thorn-bush," said he, pointing to a very large bush growing within a few steps from the saklia, "I will arrange a very nice and amusing toy for you."

Within a minute the children stood again before him—this time their hands full of quills. The hermit thereupon took up four of them and fastened with their help the corners of the large handkerchief to the apple—afterwards wound a handkerchief around the whole concern and threw it so high into the air that it really looked like an insignificant little dark point. The children in amazement did not lose sight of this point and soon beheld a small balloon lowering itself in their direction; the air filled out the handkerchief, giving it thus the look of a small air balloon, which, gracefully flying between earth and sky, gradually descended to their poor home. There was no end to the children's delight, each one of them wished to toss the dear toy higher than the first.

While they were going through various exercises, running and making a lot of noise, Zenobi sat down at the side of her delightful guest and began to ask him from what place he came.

"I, my child, come from the capital," he said; "to-day there is an unusual commotion over there. The heralds proclaimed on all the city squares that the sovereign would spare no reward to him who would bring the best imaginable necklace into the palace and that by the Fête of Circumcision of the Lord.

"In the nation a report is being spread that the only daughter of the widower-Tsar took some kind of a most terrible disease which not even the most experienced or energetic doctor is able to define or heal in any way. Something extraordinary, unseen, unheard of! Heavy bands were tying down the young Tsarevna by the hands and legs and deprived her of free movements, so that she actually resembled a corpse much more than a live being.

"In this night she had had a very remarkable dream—as though some powerful voice had promised her to cut the bands which kept her down, upon the Day of the Circumcision of the Lord, if by that day she had succeeded in finding a necklace for her magnificent neck which by its splendor exceeded all ornaments of the kind until then known."

Saying this, the old man rose. "I should like to reach that house to-day," he said, "it is high time to set forth for the journey; but how can I express my gratitude to thee, my dear child, for thy wonderful hospitality?

"Well, do not despise these lavashees (little breads), and may the Lord increase every kind of food in your most hospitable house."

"Amen," said Zenobi with all her heart, taking up the lavashees and looking back at the departing hermit. A little later she began to assemble the children around the house.

"Thanks to our guest you will have very dainty lavashees for supper this evening," she said to them, entering the saklia.

But what must have been her complete surprise when she saw her star-formed vessel standing on the table and filled to overflowing with rice. There was so little of it left when she had offered her dinner to the stranger; where then had this veritable mountain of rice come from? She stared at her older brother and their astonished eyes soon met each other.

"Isn't all this wonderful! How quickly the saintly blessing of the wise hermit was fulfilled," said he, and, falling down on their knees, the whole family began to pray most ardently and afterwards joyfully sat down to their well deserved and this time plentiful supper. In front of each child lay a fresh lavash (roll), on which Zenobi had thoughtfully piled up a large amount of rice. Having eaten the rice, each one ate a lavash too and all were perfectly satisfied, but there yet remained some rice and lavashees. Zenobi gathered the remains and the next morning the dish was again as full as ever and there were enough lavashees for all. Thus the wonder repeated itself for eight days in succession, but on the Eve of the Circumcision of the Lord, the dish looked just the way it did when they took it off the table, neither rice nor lavashees had increased. Zenobi decided to lay up what was left for dinner and let the children go to walk

without a breakfast. In order to induce them not to think of melancholy events, she wisely reminded them of the excellent toy which the dear old traveller had left with them. They immediately ran off to find the handkerchief and indeed had a very hard time; in the end Zenobi herself started out for the search and managed to find it in some remote, dark corner.

It was filled with something heavy and she naturally imagined that it must be rice. Delighted by this thought, she quickly placed the handkerchief on the table and untied it; inside of it there was a magnificent, blindingly beautiful jewel necklace! The children stood around in a circle, their little mouths opened as wide as possible.

"Let us run this minute to the town," exclaimed the older boy, "I say, let us run, Zenobi, dear, we will still succeed to get the necklace to the palace before midnight!" And taking each other's hand, brother and sister ran on the road with what they had found by accident. The town was not very far; by noon they were already on the palace square, in the very centre of which a long, long table was erected.

On it they opened and inspected the necklaces which various people brought and the Royal officials carefully put down in a large book the names of the strangers interested. These were extremely numerous and our poor little acquaintances hardly had the patience to wait for their turn to come. The official unbelievingly looked at their humble attire and the poor, insignificant handkerchief. Having placed the object on the table, he nevertheless untied the handkerchief.

A cry of complete astonishment rang out from the mouths of all those present, and before the poor orphans had time to think the matter over, they were already standing in the bedroom of the suffering Tsarevna and saw how the Tsar, her father, with a trembling hand placed the necklace on his invalid daughter's neck. Then turning to them, he naturally asked who they were and where under the sky they had found such an unheard of and extraordinary treasure.

Zenobi with true childlike straightforwardness related all that had taken place to the Tsar, who patiently listened to her simple, yet most pathetic speech, in which one could clearly make out her warmest faith in God and her thankfulness and gratitude to the holy martyr Anastasia; he actually felt very much moved and sweet tears were to be seen in his great eyes.

"Take my guests," he said to those near him, pointing to Zenobi and her brother, "feed them, let them drink and appease their aroused feeling and great anxiety, but when they are rested, clothe them in the finest costumes and bring them hither."

Then he ordered his aides-de-camp to bring the image of the all-holy Fate-decider and having placed it on the pillow of the little princess, he gave orders that the prayers for her speedy recovery and convalescence should begin.

By order of the King, the doors of the palace were solemnly thrown open and all who desired to pray were allowed to enter the enormous precincts of the bedroom. The number of those praying increased hourly; not long before midnight the chamberlains and ladies of honor of His Majesty the King conducted our dear little acquaintances, attired in gorgeous costumes, which gave still greater charm and beauty to their natural handsomeness and grace. The grieved Tsar made a sign, indicating his wish that they should stand in a line with him; all eyes were fixed on Zenobi, who, not noticing anything special, quietly fell down on her knees and instantly began to pray with all her heart and soul.

Exactly at midnight the Tsarevna raised her head and happily looked at the loyal people who had been praying for her; then made the holy sign of the cross—then actually sat up in bed! The King rushed towards her and took her up in his arms. The child put her arms around her father's neck and sweet, sweet tears flowed out of the eyes of both, and how open-heartedly and sincerely they sang, together with the people present, a true song of praise to the holy martyr Anastasia! At the end of the prayer, the Tsar led the Tsarevna to Zenobi and said:

"After God and His holy servant thou must certainly thank her, whom He chose to be the instrument of thy precious recovery, yes, may she take the place of thine all-beloved late mother!"

All present naturally hastened to bring their loyal and dutiful congratulations to the Tsar and his bride, but the little Tsarevna quite overwhelmed Zenobi with caresses and kisses.

Immediately some noblemen were sent after her brothers and sisters, who from that time onwards lived at the palace and were educated together with the dear little princess.

Zenobi, however, having become Queen never forgot the poor, the religious and the queer, and the Lord blessed her with the birth of a son, who immediately became heir-presumptive to the throne. The reign of her husband was most peaceful and happy, and having lived to an advanced age in model mutual accord, the reigning sovereigns died both on the same day, reminding their son never to forget the Only Real and True Faith, the Faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

XI. Saint Mourvanoss

A STORY

Mourvanoss was the first saint in our highly honorable royal family, later on so abundant in holy martyrs, preachers and leaders. In the year three hundred and ninety-three A.D. the Georgian King Varaz (ovenne)-Bakarr was favored with the birth of a son Mourvanoss, the birth of whom had been predicted to his mother by angels. This mother was namely the grand-daughter of Revv, the son of Mirian and daughter of Trdat, that is to say third cousin of her husband the Tsar Varaze-Bakarr, the grandson of Bakarr the First and son to

Mirdat the Third. Bakarr the First loved very much his dear nephews, especially the younger of them, Bakourious. The son of Bakarr the First, Mirdat was almost the same age as Trdat and the cousins frequently passed the time together, their children grew up under the shelter of this friendship and did not notice how their childish friendship went over into love. Although the parents had absolutely nothing against the marriage, yet the youthful Tsarevna was always tormented by the thought that they were not acting in accordance with the holy laws of the church, which strictly forbade marriage between two third cousins. Most honorable, good, simple, merciful, helping everybody in case of need or unhappiness, she as Tsaritsa still went on tormenting herself with the acknowledgment of her sin and, see! the Lord really wished to quiet and comfort her and as a sign of forgiveness sent angels, who announced to her that He blessed her marriage by the birth af a saintly baby.

While still at his mother's breast, Mourvanoss regularly observed the fasts, refusing to suck the breast on Wednesdays and Fridays. Hardly had he learned to talk when he earnestly began to commit to memory what he had heard in the church and gradually as he grew older instructed himself always more and more in the holy scriptures.

When Varaze-Bakarr died, Mourvanoss and his brothers and sisters were children, and as guardian over them they chose the uncle Trdat, having also handed over to his administration the kingdom until the coming of age of the children of Varaze-Bakarr and his daughter, who had already died, while, however, the younger son of Varaze-Bakarr, Faremanne, from his second wife, was being educated at the home of the kristav of Sammeshvillde. Notwithstanding his very advanced age Trdat reigned most wisely; he was a thoroughly God-fearing, sensible and cautious man. Thanks to his extreme wisdom the Persians were completely conquered, the right-

eous state of affairs again introduced into the country and many churches restored and newly erected.

Under him died the well-known Bishop Yovv and was superseded by Tlia. Although he of course paid tribute to the Persians, yet he understood how to get back from them Rousstave where he then triumphantly built a church. He also finely restored Nekreziy.

Mourvanoss was already fifteen years old, when the Greek Emperor, Theodosius the Younger, came upon the throne and the relations between Greece and Persia became worse and worse.

The new Emperor fearing that other nations might unite and make common cause with his enemies, offered Trdat an alliance, to assure which he demanded some one of the children of Varaze-Bakarr as hostage. Good Trdat, who equally loved all his grandsons, was in the greatest confusion, while reflecting whom he should select, when to him appeared Mourvanoss and energetically announced that he was going to Greece, where he had long desired to be, as it was the centre and capital of the whole Christian world, and with general consent and approbation he started off for Constantinople. There he devoted himself to fasting, praying and preaching, rebuking the tremendous worldly splendor with which the Emperor constantly surrounded him.

To drown unnecessary gossip he clothed himself in a vlassianitsa of most ordinary goat wool. To the general astonishment of the people he soon acquired a complete and perfect knowledge of the Greek and Syrian languages and ardently studied philosophy. The Lord now rewarded him with the exceptional gift of being capable of healing the sick. Thanks to his petition the remains of the martyrs, who had suffered torment and death in Persia, were safely transported into old Georgia. Once upon a time, on the eve of the Most Holy Baptism of the Lord, intending to pass the whole night in devotion and prayer, Mourvanoss ordered his servant to bring him some butter for the little lamp.

But he brusquely answered him: "Thou art a royal son and, instead of reigning as it becomes one of thy rank, thou livest as a monk without eating a morsel from one Sunday to another," and he did not go for the desired butter. But the Tsarevitch filled the little lamp with water instead of butter, and, lighting it, accomplished with this marvellous light his holy, holy prayers. Seven whole days and nights the wonderful light did not once go out, and during that period our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the Saint to invisibly accompany and protect him everywhere. With the help and favor of God the Tsarevitch carried out many wonders, healing the sick with the water of his little lamp. The Emperor namely had a eunuch who used to like to come and pray together with the Saint.

The Tsarevitch thought of leaving the Imperial Court accompanied by the eunuch, but Theodosius, having heard of the plan, sent a guard to watch them. Nevertheless through the almighty mercy of God they succeeded in avoiding being closely observed by them and during the night ran away. An all-shining holy pillar went in front of them, guiding them and illuminating their road.

Upon the appearance of the pillar the following words were heard coming out of it: "He who doth follow me will never fall into the region of darkness and unbelief!"

Finding a respectable vessel, they after a few days arrived in a port then unknown to them, where they were immediately locked up in the local prison. But that same night a terrific earthquake with perfectly awful noise took place there and many, many people perished through it. To the commandant of the city appeared a perfectly unknown man, the very voice of whom reminded one of tremendous rolls of thunder.

"Deliver thou this minute the true servants of God!" he called out, "otherwise this wicked town will be turned to ashes."

The frightened official immediately had the prisoners

led out and freed and they started off for Jerusalem, where at that time there lived the runaway from Rome captive, Tsar Pipinoss, with his wife Malienoss. They were very religiously inclined, had entirely given up all wordly habits and pretensions, became monks and lived at Jerusalem in two different monasteries, which they themselves had erected. They caressingly received the newcomers. Having rested a little, the saints went to the tomb of the Lord, where they also became monks. Mourvanoss was named Peter and the eunuch John.

Who can possibly describe their charitable deeds! They shone like illuminators, instructing and converting all and everything simply by the splendid example of their own lives! They constructed two monasteries and connected with these a house of refuge of strangers for Georgians and Greeks, where the Tsarevitch humbly waited upon travellers, and while occupied with such actions he reached his twenty-fifth year. This monastery was named after the most Holy Virgin. At this time the devil suddenly pounced down upon him in the disguise of a stranger and began to argue with and insult the Saint for having renounced all his rights to the crown and for having humbly served his own servants, but the righteous hermit Peter soon found out with whom he had to do and angrily chased him out of the hospice of strangers. Then our Lord Jesus Christ for a second time appeared to him and drew his attention towards the sky, where the Saint now beheld a temple, in which fully fifty tsars of indescribable beauty were singing hymns unto God and glorifying His Holy Name. In the number of these select Christian worshippers the Lord also promised to add the Tsarevitch Mourvanoss.

He was sixty-five years old when the patriarch of Jerusalem, Anastasius, made him a full priest. He went off into a desert, where on the banks of the Jordan he founded yet another monastery.

John accompanied him everywhere. Here he successfully healed a man possessed with the devil, and delivered

John from a tumor which had formed itself on his face and threatened to deprive him of his sight. When, however, John once more fell ill and suffered from some deadly disease, the Saint implored that his life might be prolonged for still twelve years.

He then visited and inspected all the Egyptian and Skithian monasteries and returned to his own monastery with a hospice for travelling strangers. At the time of hunger, he by the strength of his righteous prayers filled the monastery dwellings with bread and berries and the cellars with butter and wine.

In that year good John peacefully died and he was solemnly interred in the monastery of the most Holy Virgin, which is to this day known under the designation of "the monastery of the Georgians." Soon afterwards the Bishop of Mayum died and the inhabitants having called together a meeting, unanimously chose Peter the Georgian to be bishop in the place of the deceased, and the patriarch fully approved their choice, but the most humble Peter, not knowing how to avoid such a high honor, thought of throwing himself down from an elevated spot in order to break either a hand or a leg and so appear disqualified for the election unless he should possibly succeed in hiding himself by flight.

Then the Lord appeared to him a third time with a quantity of angels and ordered him to accept the bishopric. Many a time the good and God-fearing people in Mayrounne heard the voice, which before had announced various news to the Saint. At the time of a great dryness the holy prayers of the Bishop brought down innumerable wonders. Fruitless parents were comforted by the birth of children; the sick were healed and recuperated, fruitless trees were instantly covered with fruit; fishermen who until then had always been unsuccessful in their attempts, now pulled out of the water laden nets. The Lord besides all this favored him with the exhalted gift of becoming a prophet and enabled him thus to see the saintly souls in Heaven. Bishop Peter was already

eighty-one years old, when the all-holy fathers Tsaya and Zenomme died and the ever-fortunate Bishop saw their sacred souls rising to Heaven. The all-reverent Peter had been obliged to stand much in the course of his life from the monophysites, through whose sly proceedings he was for a short time deprived of his righteous pulpit, to the great grief of the true believers. Emperor Leo Frakiisky had hardly ascended the throne, when he hastened to restore the Mayioun bishop in his rightful position. But he did not long keep his throne, for he soon felt the approach of his death and announced these solemn news to all those who belonged to his parish.

At that time Father Athanasius was favored with a superb vision: the saints were praying to the Lord that he should order them to bring up to their heavenly abode the all-holy bishop Peter, who had done so exceedingly much in converting thousands and thousands of unbelievers to the one True and Holy Faith!

Within ten days the wish of the saints was carried out. The Saint passed these ten days in constant prayer, on the tenth day he conducted a communion service, communed himself and also many true followers, blessed the enthusiastic crowd and having tenderly parted with all his dear folks he returned to his cell, where he serenely died and was borne to Heaven by the mercy of the Almighty God on the second day of December.

Many righteous and holy followers saw his soul carried by saints preceded by the holy martyr Peter of Alexandria, and heard their praises and songs of "Glory to God." Many till then incurable were healed simply by being brought up to and placed against his holy body. The holy Roman Pope Gregory Diologue dedicated a magnificent funeral oration to his precious memory in his all-famous book.

XII. Zesva

Two horsemen were giving chase to some wild goats. Quickly did their most daring horses run, but still faster did the light little goats save themselves by flight, jumping across narrow gorges with one bound, springing on small plateaus, and in a word as though favored with having wings they seemed to fly through bushes and low shrubs. Now, however, they made for a very high mountain covered with bushes and forests and rapidly found their way among green branches and blooming trees, ascending higher and higher. The pace of the pursuit of the horsemen considerably slowed down as the various plants were every now and then the cause of unexpected delays, while their victims, the goats, were able to catch breath between each long jump and thus got on rather well and without much difficulty.

The comparatively large horses were of course forced to go out of their way in order to avoid knocking up against trees, which barred the trail, and even where the grass had been smoothed out the animals went rather quietly and the energetic horsemen saw themselves more than once obliged to cut and bend down massive branches which formed the chief impediment in the whole undertaking. When after long and renewed attempts they safely reached the summit of the mountain, the goats had completely disappeared, and looking in various directions in order to discover the hiding place of the fugitives, the plucky horsemen cast their glances at that part of the mountain at the foot of which spread itself out like a fairyland the perfectly magnificent valley of Alazana. And how beautiful she looked on this rare sunny day, all shining with soft sweet rays, separated from each other by a large number of various colored shades, one more perfect and exquisite than the other.

Now she would seem to take a bath in some pale, rosy

waves, produced by an unknown marvellous battery of light, then again she so dazzled in precious gold and finally blazed with emeralds and the branches of its quite innumerable vineyards. There was also the sea of clusters, which could be distinguished through its little fruit garden, and like gigantic flower bushes they concentrated in themselves an amazing variety of flowers from the very most conspicuous to the darkest and palest. In astonishment did the hunters stop. Till then none of the Toushines had known about the existence of the highly blessed and favored Kakhitia. Being illuminated and showing all of her blinding beauty, she indeed seemed to them a perfect paradise and attracted forever their exultant glances. And the hunt and goats and everything else was forgotten. They stood there in perfect adoration of this unusual perfection of beauty and being unable to resist any longer the force which drew them nearer and nearer to the happy land, they descended into the gorge of Pankisse. On the River Bazzarisse-Tskali they chanced to come upon a detachment of Tartar frontier guards, who immediately surrounded the newcomers, and having dealt with them in the most insulting and truly shameful manner, again chased them into the mountains from which they had come. Arriving at home, the indignant Toushines made a halt near that river, where the nation usually assembled when it was necessary to decide some important affairs. Here did they also announce the facts of their perilous adventure and demand a revenge. Soon by the summons of the Elder there came together not only the Toushines, but also the Pchaves and Kersourians, called in to give their advice.

They all unanimously decided to take terrible revenge for the insult inflicted on their countrymen. The Pchaves and Khevsourians promised their assistance and with general consent the whole army was divided into two parts. One division was to conceal itself in the gorge of Pankiss, while the other should direct itself towards the Baktrionan fortress, which was situated to the east of

Alazana and was in those remote times considered a very powerful fortification. Nowadays we can judge of it only by its ruins, which, however, all testify its past grandeur and mightiness. It was impossible to cross the river otherwise than over the bridge, which the sly Tartars covered with ashes in order to always find out the exact number and direction of new arrivals. But this ingenious slyness was not long hidden from the searching eye of Zesva, the valiant leader of the detachment. He ordered to stop the horses near the outer gates and, riding at full speed across the bridge, he succeeded in hiding himself in a valley before the Tartars found time to appear. The latter, guiding themselves by the direction of the traces, started in pursuit of their antagonists, but with every step getting farther and farther away from those to capture which was their intense desire. In the meantime the night came on and, profiting by the darkness, the Toushines reached the foot of the very fortress without being noticed by anyone. Having ordered his warriors to rest, Zesva, without breaking the silence, took up a hammer, covered it with cow-hair felt, unloaded from his horse a very large maprasha (*i.e.,* a pair of sacks tied unto the steed) filled with strong iron tusks and knocked the first great nail into the battlements of the fortress, and standing upon it and reaching as high as possible he made a second one stick, and thus he continued until he had made himself a kind of ladder of iron hooks to the tip-top of the high rampart wall, whence he jumped down and in a flash threw open the heavy gates.

Like a rushing stream did the Toushines make their way into the fortress, while the first rays of the rising sun were falling upon the grim old fortifications. The Tartars, half asleep, ran out into a field, but in vain for now they were met by the Pchaves and Khevsoures, who had ventured out from the gorge of Pankisse. The Tartars, surrounded on all sides, were exterminated to the last one and the field of honor of Allavanne, on which the glorious fight had taken place, was from now on

known under the name of "Gatzvetila" (from the word "gatsveta"—"they are killing").

The magnanimous and lion-hearted Zesva handed out all the rich booty of this ever-memorable day to his faithful allies, *i.e.*, the Pchaves and Khevsoures, while Gatzvetila became the common property of all Toushines. Nowadays this historic spot is known under the designation, "Field of Allavanna." Some people pretend that this name comes from the Georgian word "ali," *i.e.*, "flame," as on this field, after the fire of the battle, the Tartar blood went on smoking for a long time; others say this name originates from the Kshtinskian words "al"=vladyka and "va"=here. This latter supposition, it seems to me, must be nearer in approaching the truth, as Allvani was one of the country palaces of Tamara, the ruins of which were not kept, although traditions confirm the existence of a palace on the above-mentioned field.

XIII. The Tale of Mikhian

A LEGEND

A wonderfully gorgeous reception was being prepared at the Turkish Court. The Sultan had taken it into his head to brilliantly celebrate and entertain the all-famous hero-prince Solagge, a Mikhian by descent, who had just arrived in his domains. At the door the Vizir met the guest with open arms and explained to him what a fortunate concurrence of circumstances it had been that had granted Turkey the chance of beholding him within their borders. Solagge wanted to reply, but the Vizir, without listening to him, continued his pompous speech and thus obliged his guest to hold his tongue. The Vizir had received instructions from the Sultan to seek out means under pretense of friendship and veneration in

order to have the famous hero perish, and so the sly Ottoman official proposed that he should fight a duel with an Arab giant and boxer, promising in reward for victory the position of a Pasha of Achaltsisk. Solagge refused the reward, not wishing to abandon little Mikhia, to serve which he had devoted his whole life, but the duel he accepted, and so the Vizir personally brought him a rare and expensive horse with a golden saddle, gold stirrups, etc., saying: "Here you have a steed worthy of a future Pasha of Achaltsisk." On a Friday the whole town came together on a well-known square. Proudly did the Arab rival parade on his foaming horse. Solagge reverently bowed to him, but the former, instead of replying, simply rushed at his antagonist with a hatchet in his hand.

Notwithstanding the perfectly unexpected attack, Solagge all the same succeeded in repelling him, but a second and even a third hatchet came flying after the first. The clever Mikhian missed their aim and without trouble succeeded in protecting himself against all of them and was soon on the point of attacking his enemy. Like a regular tornado he pounced down upon his rival and at full gallop let his own hatchet fall on him. He cut the Arab through and through and threw him off his horse to the ground. Wishing to speedily arouse the dissatisfaction of the people, the moullahs (*i.e.,* priests) surrounded the corpse, read aloud the Khoran and filled the air with their hideous mournful lamentations and cries. But the nation, greatly delighted over the daring exploit of Solagge, remained perfectly insensible to their never-ceasing weeping and howling.

With great signs of distinction was Solagge conducted into the palace, where the Sultan, after a most friendly and hearty reception and pleasant congratulations, rewarded his excessive chivalry with gold and precious stones and again offered him the position of a Pasha of Achaltsisk, but Solagge refused even a second time.

"Remember thy wonderful strength and the extraor-

dinary mightiness which thou wilt be able to dispose of!" said the Sultan.

"O Sovereign!" replied the famous hero, "I sincerely thank thee for the honor thou bestowest upon me and the extreme confidence which thou hast in me, but know thou then that being inspired by the mercy of God with that serene strength which hath drawn unto me thine elevated attention, I nevertheless do not feel the least need in obtaining any other power, whatever it may be, besides the one which gives me the love of my fellow-citizens."

And Solagge remained true to his word and passed his whole life in poor Mikhia, protecting the slighted, punishing the lawless, and never died, for even down to our days he lives with boundless glory in national songs and legends, blessed and adored by every generation, as a shining example of courage and uncorrupted and sincere love for his native land.

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